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Church, Ministry AND Sacraments

BY

REV. NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.
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THE Editors are glad to have this work to add to the series. It treats a subject of vital importance with great care, precision, and sympathy. Its reverent tone will impress every reader; and those who know most about the grave questions discussed will most fully appreciate the adequate learning and deliberate consideration which underlie the statements, and give to their simple form an unusual weight. Absolute unanimity in every detail is not to be expected, but the Editors expect from the great body of readers ready approbation of the book as a whole.

A. H. CHARTERIS.
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CHURCH, MINISTRY, AND SACRAMENTS

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH

I. THE English word *Church* is derived from the Greek word *Kuriaké*, signifying the Lord's, or belonging to the Lord. In this sense it is applied to the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 20), and again to the Lord's Day (Rev. i. 10). From this root the Teutonic and Scandinavian races have derived their word for Church, *e.g.*, the German *Kirche*, the Dutch *Kerk*, the Scottish *Kirk*. The New Testament equivalent, however, is *Ecclesia*, which appears in the French *Eglise*, the Italian *Chiesa*, and the Celtic *Eaglais*. *Ecclesia* was originally employed by the Greeks to denote an assembly of free citizens summoned together or "called out" by a herald in connection with public affairs, though sometimes it was applied to an assembly of any sort, whether lawfully convened or not (as in Acts xix. of the unruly gathering at Ephesus). In the Septuagint (a Greek version of the Old Testament) the "congregation" of Israel is called the *Ecclesia;* thus suggesting an interesting link between the old and the new Dispensation. The Jews were "called out" from all nations of the earth to be the peculiar people of God. "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the

promises" (Rom. ix. 4). They were the "Church in the wilderness," a shadow of better things to come. Their unity was more than national or tribal. It was based on a special idea; established in a special way; and maintained for a special end. In the Church as now constituted we find the same fundamental conception, though of course vastly enlarged and purified. In its simplest meaning the word may be taken as denoting the "assembly" or "congregation" of those who have been "called out" to be Christ's witnesses in the world and the receivers of His heavenly grace—"a chosen generation; a royal priesthood" (1 Peter ii. 9).

II. **Use of the term "Church" in the New Testament.**—The word, so far as we know, was used only twice by our Lord Himself. The first occasion was specially memorable. Peter had just uttered the great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16). Then followed a wonderful saying (always to be read in connection with the truth to which the Apostle had testified), "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). The other instance is in the same Gospel. Jesus was instructing His disciples concerning their duty towards an offending brother. In the event of an offence not being removed they were "to tell it unto the Church" (Matt. xviii. 17). In both passages the word is employed to denote the "congregation of the faithful," with this difference, that whereas in the first it is the whole, in the second it is only a portion of the congregation.

But while it is true that our Lord did not use the word except on these two occasions, there is yet much in His teaching that must be held to refer more or less directly to the subject. The ideas now commonly associated with the Church were set forth by Him in relation to the "kingdom of God," or the "kingdom of Heaven." In such parables, *e.g.*, as the Sower, the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Hid Treasure,

the Pearl, and the Draw Net, the Kingdom which He came to found upon earth is presented in broad outline. No doubt this Kingdom transcends even our highest conceptions of the Church and cannot be absolutely identified with it. Nevertheless there is such a connection that what is said of the one is in some measure applicable to the other.

In the Apostolic writings the Church comes for the first time distinctly into prominence. Its true birthday as a society of professing Christians was at Pentecost, although there is an aspect under which it may be said to have existed from the time of the primal Covenant with Abraham and his seed. When the glorified Saviour, "being by the right hand of God exalted," bestowed upon His disciples the gifts He had received for men, they were formed in a sense higher than before into a living organism, which is divine in its origin and is sustained at every stage of its progress by a life imparted by God the Holy Spirit. From that moment onwards the term Church becomes one of the most characteristic expressions in the sacred writings. Sometimes it is used to denote the Christians of a country, *e.g.*, "The Churches of Galatia" (Gal. i. 2). "The Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria" (Acts ix. 31, R.V.). "The Churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. ii. 14). Again, the Christians resident in the same town, *e.g.*, "The Church that was at Antioch" (Acts xiii. 1). "The Church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts viii. 1). "The Church which is at Cenchrea" (Rom. xvi. 1). Occasionally a few Christians meeting for mutual instruction and worship in a house are called a Church, *e.g.*, "The Church which is in the house of Nymphas" (Col. iv. 15. See also Philemon 2; Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). In no case is the word employed to signify the building in which the public ministrations of religion are conducted. We find it, however, either in its singular or plural form, with all those varying shades of meaning which are common at the present day. Gradually, as the unity

and catholicity of the Church were realised by the Apostles, the word came to be applied in the most general sense to the whole body of believers on earth, "the company of the faithful throughout all the world." This is specially noticeable in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the doctrine of the Church in its ideal aspect (which in this case is the ultimately real) is set forth with a fulness which justly entitles it to be called "The Epistle of the Church" (see, *e.g.*, i. 15-23; ii. 19-22; iv. 8-16; v. 23-27).

III. **The Church as Defined in the Creeds.**—In the ancient Creeds we do not find any definition further than is contained in the expressions, "The Holy Catholic Church" (Apostles'), "One Catholic and Apostolic Church" (Nicene).

In the Augsburg Confession (1530) the Church is defined by Luther and the Saxon Reformers to be "the Congregation of Saints or General Assembly of the faithful, wherein the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."

Calvin defines the visible Church as the "Multitude of men diffused through the world who profess to worship One God in Christ; and are initiated into their faith by Baptism, testifying their unity in the true doctrine and charity by partaking in the Supper; have consent in the Word of God; and for the preaching of that Word maintain the ministry ordained of God."[1]

In the Scots confession of John Knox (1560) the "Notes" (or distinguishing marks) of the "true Kirk of God" are as follows: (1) "The true preaching of the Word of God. (2) The right administration of the Sacraments, which must be annexed to the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm the same in our hearts. (3) Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered."

The 19th Article of the Church of England says:—"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached,

[1] *Inst.* lib. i. 57.

and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (the chief standard of the Church of Scotland as of Presbyterian Churches generally) thus defines the Church (chap. xxv.): —"The Catholic or universal Church which is invisible consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the Head thereof, and is the Spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible Church which is also Catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this visible Catholic Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the Saints in this life to the end of the world, and doth by His own Presence and Spirit according to His promise make them effectual thereunto. This Catholic Church has been sometimes more, sometimes less visible, and particular Churches which are members thereof are more or less pure according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest Churches under Heaven are subject both to mixture and error. . . . Nevertheless there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His Will. There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ."

The Creeds of the Reformed Churches are thus in substantial agreement with respect to the "Notes" of the Church of Jesus Christ. In none of them do we find any prescribed form of ecclesiastical polity. Not, indeed, because that is a matter of no importance or one on which we are left without guidance. There are certain great principles or lines of "Order" which must

always be observed if the Church is to maintain its position as a visible and organised society. But the *essence* of the Church is the spiritual union of believers with Christ, and in Him with one another as joint partakers of the common life which flows from the Vine into all its several branches. Hence the old maxims, "Ubi Spiritus Dei ibi ecclesia" (Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church), and "Ubi Christus ibi ecclesia" (Where Christ is, there is the Church). A believing people united together under their Divine Lord, maintaining that relationship by fellowship in the Word and Sacraments, and bringing forth the fruits "of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," is the simplest conception we can form of the Church of the New Testament. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," said the Lord Jesus, "there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). It is the possession of the one Spirit of life and love through faith in Christ which makes a Church.

IV. **The Church Visible and Invisible.**—This distinction is strongly emphasised in the Creeds of the Reformed Church, particularly in the *Westminster Confession*. Though implied, it cannot be said to have received any formal expression or even distinct recognition in the New Testament. There, the whole company of the Baptized are represented as "the Church"; though the Apostles were well aware that all were not in living communion with the Lord or fruit-bearing branches of the Vine into which they had been engrafted. Within certain limits, however, the distinction is both reasonable and necessary. No doubt it may be pushed too far, so far indeed as to obscure the privilege and responsibility of having had the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost declared unto us and pronounced upon us. But it is obvious that there are Christians and Christians. From this point of view the terms visible and invisible suggest the distinction between nominal and real—worthy and unworthy. As "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the

flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. ii. 28, 29), so too in the Church there must be a corresponding difference among the Baptized. "For lack of diligent observing the difference, first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted, sometimes more, sometimes less, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed."[1]

There is a further distinction between the Church visible and invisible. The latter is immensely more comprehensive than the former. It embraces all the servants of God now at rest in Paradise ; all the innumerable company of the redeemed gathered out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue who have passed into the nearer Presence of their Lord and Saviour.

It is thus manifest from the nature of the case that there are not *two* Churches, but gravely different aspects of the *one* Church of the Baptized, according as it is viewed from the human or from the Divine side. Under one aspect it presents itself as the whole society of professing Christians, some more some less sincere—some more some less holy in their lives—fishes good and bad gathered into the net of the Gospel and there mingling until the day comes when God who knows the heart will separate them, and "shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend" (Matt. xiii. 41). Under another aspect, though not co-extensive with the first, it comprises the blessed company of believers of all ages and of all countries who have lived or are living now in vital union with Christ through the Spirit, Who is the "earnest and the first-fruits" of the inheritance.

V. **The Church a Divine Institution.**—Not even in its visible and external aspect can the Church be regarded as a mere human organisation. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church," He intimated a purpose (foreshadowed in the Old Testament and yet more clearly revealed in His own Parables) which was to be accomplished in the fulness of the times.

[1] Hooker's *Eccles. Polity*, iii. 3.

What He designed was not merely to gain adherents in the sense in which a school of philosophy might be said to have such, but to constitute a community to which His disciples should belong—a body heavenly in its calling, spiritual in its nature, and deriving all its permanence, authority, and vitality from union with Himself as its living Head, and thus the depository of all those manifold gifts and powers with which He has endowed it. For this reason the Church is unlike every other society in the world. It has its foundations not on earth but in Heaven—not in man but in God. It is not a voluntary association devised by the wisdom or piety of its members for their own mutual benefit. Neither is it the product of advancing civilisation or the creation of the State. It may indeed lawfully enter into alliance with the State on terms that may be of signal advantage to both; but if true to its divine origin and prerogatives it will never barter away or forego that spiritual independence which is its inalienable right, always remembering that "the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of Church officers distinct from the civil magistrate" (*Confess. of Faith*, chap. xxx.). In a word it is a divine institution, founded by Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God, now raised from the dead and set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. As such it is supernatural in its origin, its continuance, and its destiny.

This view of the Church is of great practical importance. The gulf which separates the actual from the ideal is apt to make us insensible of the Church's true calling. We are prone to judge it, not by the fair vision which passes before our eyes in the Word of God, but rather by the blurred image we see in Christendom as it now exists. The fact that the Church is meanwhile *in* the world though not *of* it, touching human affairs at a hundred points and in turn affected by them, has oftentimes a disastrous effect upon us. The Scriptural ideal is lowered proportionately. Earthly conceptions take the place of those that are spiritual and divine. We need

to be raised to a higher level, above the rivalry of parties, the inconsistencies of Christians, and the disturbing sounds of controversy, in order that we may discern the true glory of that Jerusalem which is above, and is the mother of us all (Gal. iv. 26); the Church which is Christ's anointed witness in the world; "His new creation by water and the word," "His body" (Eph. i. 23), through which, as "a Priest upon His throne," He is evermore fulfilling all the counsel of His own will. It is only when our eyes are opened by the "eye salve" of the Holy Spirit that we can spiritually apprehend "what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be *head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. i. 18-23, R.V.).

VI. **The Church an Organised Society.**—In the New Testament we do not find anything like a formal constitution for the Christian Church. In this respect there is a wide distinction between it and the Jewish Church, where everything had to be ordered and done according to the heavenly pattern showed to Moses on the mount. Christianity is a religion not of the letter but of the spirit. With respect to the Church's organisation, much room is undoubtedly left for diversity of practice without any breach either of Catholic unity or continuity. Creed and life are above order. "All notions that the Church is necessarily here rather than there—that it is signified by the presence of Bishop or of Presbyter—that the form, whatever it be, is before the spirit—all such notions are outside the sphere of the New Testament. No ingenuity can bring them on a level with it. St.

Paul would have turned away from them. St. Peter would have denounced them. The whole meaning of our Lord's teaching is at variance with them."[1] "The question," says another writer, "whether a given form of organisation is of the *essence* of the Church of Christ, so that we can sharply define the Church as that body of Christian people which possesses a three-fold ministry with direct organic succession from the Apostles, to which the Roman Church would add the further qualification of submission to the See of Rome; or whether the Church in its essence is simply the association of those who profess belief in Christ and obedience to Him, organisation being indeed in the nature of things indispensable and yet an accident not bound up in the nature of the institution, is one which lies at the root of our conception of Christianity. . . . It is a question on which practical issues depend. If the former theory be the true one the Christian Church at the present day is confined to the Greek, the Roman, and the Anglican Communions, and a vast proportion of the most intelligent and active-minded Christians in the United States, in the Colonies, and on the continent of Europe [he might have added in Great Britain] are outside the Church's pale. If, on the contrary, we accept the latter theory, it must be admitted that from a very early period in the history of Christianity the letter began to prevail over the spirit, and that for many centuries the true idea of the kingdom of Heaven was obscured by the growth of a vast organisation, admirably adapted for the age from which it sprang, and being undoubtedly a part of God's providential order, yet being after all only a phase, a temporary and partial presentment of that kingdom of Heaven which it claimed to embody completely and exclusively."[2] These are statements which in the main must command the sympathy of all who have a true perception of the *essence* of the Church or of Christianity itself.

But it does not follow that the external organisation

[1] Tulloch's *The Ideal of the Church*, 1879.
[2] Bartlett's Bampton Lecture, "The Letter and the Spirit."

of the Church is of no importance at all, or that one form of organisation may not be more Scriptural than another. God is not the "Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the Saints" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). "The true life of a man, what he really is, is determined by his character, the spirit of his dispositions and actions; but no man would therefore dare to live without having more or less definite rules for his guidance; in other words, without owning law in some definite form or another. So there can be no Church without some form of external polity, and there may be, and we believe there are, ecclesiastical polities which are better than others—nearer to the New Testament ideal than others."[1]

Though we find few positive injunctions in the Gospel with respect to the details of Church Government or Worship, there are yet broad principles which may be gathered inferentially from the history of the Apostolic Church and certain lines of order in regard to some matters which are for all time, *e.g.*, in relation to the Ministry and the Sacraments. Onwards from the day of Pentecost we can trace the growth of the Church's organisation, not indeed after a uniform or stereotyped pattern in every particular, but with sufficient distinctness to be easily recognisable in its main outlines. Its members are not a shapeless mass of mere units without visible coherence, social life, or united action. There are many similitudes by which its varied aspects and functions are set forth, but they are all based on one fundamental fact that it is a community which, being "called out" from among mankind, stands in the relation to Christ of one spiritually organised society, partaking of common privileges, a common calling, and a common hope, because partaking of a common life through the indwelling of "One Spirit." For instance, it is the "Body" of Christ (Eph. i. 23; Col. i. 18, 24; ii. 19). As in our physical frame the head and the members are organically connected, so too in the Church

[1] Lightfoot, *Philippians*.

It is not a fortuitous collection of believers but a society, "shaped, prepared, and life-endowed to correspond to its head." The head is one, and though the members are many, yet all is marked out and "curiously wrought" with symmetry and grace to serve the one design. Organisation is more than juxtaposition. Just as the purposes of our mind are accomplished by our corporeal organs—the tongue that speaks and the hand that works—even thus is Christ ever fulfilling by His Church all the great ends of His mediatorial offices. Another similitude is that of a building resting on the one foundation and ever growing into an holy temple in the Lord (Eph. ii. 19-22). Introduced into the Church through the initiatory rite of baptism, the Christian finds himself surrounded from the first by the sacred institutions and observances which constitute its "order," though under diverse forms of administration. These are the appointed means by which he "grows up in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 15, 16, R.V.).

VII. **The Church in its Ideal Aspect.**—When we speak of the *ideal* in relation to the Church it must not be supposed that there is no correspondence at all between it and the *actual* of existing Christendom. Some correspondence there must be wherever the Church is pure, living, and faithful. Only in so far as it seeks to realise its ideal can it attain the end of its existence. True, that ideal towers high above the level of its present attainments. But not for ever. When the scaffolding has been removed and the dust of conflict is scattered, there shall yet appear "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." It shall be "holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27).

There are four "Notes" (or test marks) applicable to this point; and, the more clearly they are recognised

in any branch of the Church, the more closely does it correspond to the Divine ideal. They are these:—(1) Holiness; (2) Catholicity; (3) Unity; (4) Continuity.

(1) Holiness. The Church is holy in respect to its vocation. God hath "called us with an holy calling" (2 Tim. i. 9). The body which is thus separated from the common world, that it may be sanctified and become "an habitation of God through the Spirit," may justly be called holy.

Again, the Church is holy because a "holy seed" is in the midst thereof, imparting a certain degree of sanctity to the whole body. Despite the grievous sins of many, and the shortcomings and faults of all, it yet comprehends in its wide embrace all in whom the Spirit of holiness dwells and works.

Lastly, the Church is holy because of its relation to the all-holy Son of God, whose name it bears, and whose purpose of mercy towards the race of man it is to fulfil throughout all ages. The ultimate test of a Church is the indwelling in it of the Holy Spirit as in Christ's Body.

(2) Catholicity. "The holy Catholic Church" (Apostles' Creed). *Catholic* is not a Scriptural word, though its use in the sense of *universality* has been sanctioned by long usage dating from a very early period. It first appeared in the second century in the writings of Ignatius and Polycarp. From that time onwards its use became general. In the *Westminster Confession* (chap. xxv.) it is applied to the Church both visible and invisible. Arrogantly and exclusively claimed by the Church of Rome—"the *Roman* Catholic Church"—it expresses an idea never to be lost sight of in relation to the Church, which has not a single element in its constitution of a restricted or local character. It is greater than any of its parts. It refuses to be limited by any of those artificial barriers which men have too often reared around their own little corner of the fold. It is meant to embrace all nations (Matt. xxviii. 19), to teach all things necessary for salvation (John xvi. 13), and everywhere

to nourish in its members all Christian graces (Eph. v. 25-27).

The practical realisation of this fact is one of the best correctives of that exaggerated "individualism" which often mars the beauty of personal character; as also of that intolerance which causes men, blinded by denominationalism or provincialism, to exclude from their fellowship many who belong to the Catholic Church as truly as themselves. Much as we must deplore the present condition of Christendom, and carefully as we must guard against that spurious liberality which ignores the distinction between truth and falsehood, it yet behoves us to acknowledge as Christian brethren all who acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," under whatever form of Church polity they may exist.

In the early Church and subsequently, the word *Catholic* was often employed in a sense other than is conveyed by the simple idea of universality. It also meant *orthodox* as distinguished from *heretical*—the true Church as distinguished from all divergent and rival bodies. With reference to this use of the word the following weighty words are worth pondering. "The early Christian fathers often urged the name and authority of the Church Catholic against heretics. The thoughtful student will, however, perceive a very important distinction between our position and theirs, which may materially affect, not the worth and point of the assertions, but their application to the changed circumstances of the Church. We [of the English Church] have arrayed against us the bulk of the Western Church, which has overlaid, added to, and corrupted the ancient faith, and abandoned the rule of faith in Scripture. We are severed by almost as serious differences from the varied sections of the Eastern Church. And there have grown up amongst us communities of Christians differently organised and often opposing our actions, and yet for the most part acknowledging the same creeds and doctrinal articles. There is no parallel to this state of things in antiquity. . . . Ignatius might truly say,

speaking of the three orders of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, 'Apart from these there is no Church.' . . . Apart from them there might be Jew, Heathen, or Gnostic, but not the Church. But to take these sayings of old, and to force their application dogmatically to a condition of the Church of which the venerable martyr had not the faintest glimpse, must surely be unjust to his memory and untrue to the facts."[1]

Such truths or practices as have the general consent of the Church universal may fitly be called *Catholic*, and for that reason are worthy of our deepest reverence; but great discrimination is required lest a term beautiful in itself, though often misapplied, should be used in a way calculated either unduly to enlarge or unduly to limit Christian liberty. In the Reformed Churches the value of Catholic tradition must always be held subject to the authority of Holy Scripture as the supreme rule of faith and duty.

(3) Unity. At first sight it may seem wildly extravagant to speak of unity in relation to a society so rent by division as the visible Church unquestionably is. Still the Church is one, though meanwhile we cannot see its unity. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. iv. 4-6). This does not necessarily imply external unity, such, for instance, as is claimed by Roman Catholics when they tell us that there is a ground for unity in the existence of a visible Church on earth, having for its head from age to age the successors of St. Peter, who are infallibly directed in the functions of their office by the Spirit of God. No doubt external unity is most earnestly to be desired. There ought to be much more of it than there is. Every Christian is bound to seek it with pains and prayer. Many of our divisions are quite unjustifiable. They are the bitter fruits of human passion, human ignorance, and human infirmity. They

[1] Boultbee, *Exposition of the Articles*.

weaken us extremely. To a lamentable extent they retard the progress of Christ's kingdom over all the earth.

But after all it is only to a comparatively limited extent that we can meanwhile look for the restoration of the unity of Christendom. Wherever there is living thought, as distinguished from blind submission to authority, there must be diversity of view. "The faith which was once delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 3) no doubt is a body of objective truth, not created by our opinions, but independent of them. But men see it differently, according to the point of view from which they look at it. None see it fully, and all are liable to have their belief disturbed by the medium through which the pure ray of gospel light falls upon the mind. It was not at the beginning but at the end of the Church's history that the Apostle looked for that "unity of the faith" of which he speaks. "Till we all come in (or unto) the unity of the faith" (Eph. iv. 13). Only when the varied ministries which Christ has appointed in His Church have finally worked out their design, and the "perfect man" is realised, will this blessed result be attained.

Are we then to conclude that the unity of the Church must for the present be regarded as an ideal beautiful in itself, but having no counterpart on earth? By no means. Of the Church under its invisible aspect there is no need to speak. There at all events there is "one flock, one Shepherd." But even in the Church visible there is a unity deeper and wider than is apparent on the surface. Without in any sense condoning the evil of schism, this much may be thankfully acknowledged. The more nearly we approach the heart of Christianity and realise its essential elements the more plainly does this unity appear. The headship of Christ is the true basis of the Church's unity. It is by looking steadfastly to Him that we are best able to understand what it means. The Church is one because its Lord is One, and its members being united to Him are united one to the other by a real though invisible bond which is indissoluble. The communion of Christian men—"the

communion of saints," is not the common performance of external acts, but a communion of soul with soul, and of the soul with Christ. "It is a consequence of the nature which God has given us that an external organisation should help our communion with one another; it is a consequence both of our two-fold nature and of Christ's appointment, that external acts should help our communion with Him. But subtler, deeper, diviner than anything of which external things can be either the symbol or the bond, is that inner reality and essence of union—that inter-penetrating community of thought and character which St. Paul speaks of as 'the unity of the Spirit,' and which, in the sublimest of sublime books, in the most sacred of sacred words, is likened to the oneness of the Son with the Father and of the Father with the Son."[1] The Apostle says, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," not "one senate or one sanhedrim." To be a Christian at all is to be one with all who are Christians.

(4) Continuity. Though this "Note" of the Church is not emphasised in any of the Creeds it is nevertheless so clearly implied as to be deserving of special notice. When Christ said of His Church, "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18), and again, when to the great commission to make disciples of all nations, He added this promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), it is evident that what He contemplated was the founding of an Institution that would endure through all time till the consummation of the ages. It is an historical fact that it has endured thus far, and moreover that there is in it such an undecaying vitality as gives the promise and potency of endurance for the future. The storms of centuries have not shaken the sure foundation on which it reposes. The fires of persecution have not quenched its life. Even in the darkest periods of human history its light was never completely extinguished or its candlestick removed out of its place. Often a frail bark

[1] Hatch's *Organisation of Early Christian Church.*

tempest-tossed in the midst of the sea, it has not perished, for Christ is in it. By the orderly succession of its ministry, by the preaching of the Word, by the administration of the Sacraments, and by the manifestation of the manifold grace of God, it has had a continuity such as no other institution ever had or can have.

This is an aspect of the Church which is very apt to be overlooked, especially by the various branches of the Reformed Church. We err egregiously if we suppose that what the Reformers of the sixteenth century designed was to set up a "new Church" having no root in the historical past. It is not without significance that the great movement with which their names are so gloriously associated is known to us as the *Reformation*. Their purpose was to reform, not to destroy the existing Church, to cleanse it from pollution, to liberate it from the thraldom of men who had been unfaithful to their trust, but not to break away from any doctrine or practice that could truly be called Scriptural, Catholic, or Apostolic.

The value of these considerations is obvious. In Scotland, to take but one illustration, the Church has passed through many phases and has existed under divers forms of administration—Celtic, Romanist, Protestant—but without any real breach of continuity. "We believe that our 'doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayer' have descended to us from primitive ages under often varying conditions, yet embodying one Spirit of faith and worship, and through the channel of a ministry whose continuity never has been absolutely interrupted. . . . Faith in Apostolical succession in the Roman or Anglican meaning of the term is one thing, and belief in the historical continuity and identity of a certain Church as a national branch of the Church Catholic preserving through many centuries its national characteristics and its own ministry, is quite another. This belief has no affiance with superstition, while it cannot but tend to make us think of this Church with a more intelligent reverence."[1]

[1] Story, *The Continuity of the Church of Scotland.*

VIII. **The Church's Calling.**—Being a spiritually organised and divinely instituted Society it follows that the Church has been founded for some great end. What this end is cannot be fully realised so long as attention is exclusively fixed on the salvation of its individual members. No doubt religion is an intensely personal concern. Not in the mass or aggregate are men made partakers of the Grace of the Gospel. Each separate soul must be brought into living fellowship with Christ. But more is implied in the existence of a Christian community. The Church in its corporate capacity has a mission to fulfil to the world.

The following are among the chief points embraced in the Church's calling :—

(1) It is called to hold forth the Word of Life, and purely and faithfully to administer divine ordinances. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20) is a part of its commission.

Public worship (including praise, prayer, the reading of Holy Scripture, preaching and the administration of the Sacraments) is an ordinance of Divine appointment. As a society Christians have met from the beginning for this high and blessed end, and will continue to meet till Christ comes again. No sooner had the Church received the pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost than we find its members assembling themselves together for the worship of the adorable Name into which they were baptized (Acts ii. 42). From that day till this the ancient practice which then obtained a fresh sanction and consecration, has been observed without interruption. From this point of view the authority of public worship is indisputable. "It is right to worship God," say some, "but we must be allowed to determine for ourselves how, where, and when we are to worship Him." If by this is meant that no form of ritual has been prescribed in the New Testament there is nothing to be said against it. But if it means that what is called the worship of Nature, of Art, or Humanity, in some

naturalistic sense, may properly be substituted for the worship of the Father "in Spirit and Truth," or that men may confine themselves to *private* acts of devotion, it is open to grave objection. The very existence of the Church as a Society of professing Christians, implies the necessity of united public worship. Religion unaided by this help would soon languish and common life become secularised to its core. It is mainly through the ordinances of which the Church is the guardian and dispenser, —its worship, its teaching, its sacraments, its righteous discipline and wholesome order—that the faith of its members is nourished and their spiritual life quickened and sustained.

One or two simple counsels on this branch of the subject may not be deemed inappropriate (without special reference meantime to the Sacraments, afterwards to be considered).

(*a*) No part of public worship should be unduly subordinated to another. The preaching of the Word, for example, is an essential part of Divine service. It can never be dispensed with. Though the "treasure is in earthen vessels," and therefore subject to all the infirmities of human nature, it is mighty as of old for the defence and confirmation of the Gospel. But it is not the whole. "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Matt. xxi. 13). If this could be said of the Temple, with all its multiplied rites and ceremonies, how much more of every sanctuary which now throws open its doors to Christian worshippers. To pray to our Father, making *common* prayers and supplications; to offer our intercessions in union with our Great High Priest above; to sing praises unto Him from whom all mercies flow; and to receive the blessing pronounced in His Name—are all essential parts of public worship, and none of them can be omitted without loss. It is sad to think how men may come to church without even attempting to join in the prayers that are offered.

(*b*) Every part of public worship should be characterised by faith, earnestness, devotional feeling, and rever-

ence. It is possible to preserve every essential feature of Presbyterian worship while divesting it of that baldness and slovenliness with which it has been too often chargeable. There is no incongruity between spiritual worship and that beauty which in other departments of life is so soothing to the mind and so pleasing to the eye of man. To make beauty the end is perilous and wrong, but to make it an accompaniment of spiritual worship is surely both helpful and appropriate. In this, as in all things else, we are called upon to serve God with our noblest and best.

But true reverence has its root not in the outward but in the inward. It is one of the fruits of a living faith, and is a condition of spirit which can only be attained by a chastened thoughtfulness and a humble waiting upon God.

(*c*) What is needed most of all in public worship is a quickened sense of Christ's own presence in His Church and in all His ordinances. It is the realised presence of Jesus that makes the house of prayer. The place strictly speaking is nothing—be it on the shore, on the mountain, in the desert—or in some stately building dedicated by the piety of ages to the worship of the Almighty. The number is nothing—be it a few humble Christians meeting together in the midst of heathendom—afar off upon the sea, or in the lonely wilderness, or be it the "great congregation" assembled amid the hush and stillness of the sanctuary. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20), is a promise which has never been revoked. It is the charter of public worship. "In My Name," in obedience to My command, trusting in My grace, looking for My blessing, with Me as warrant and centre—such is the condition which the Great Head of the Church has laid down. Thus is the Church on earth united with the Church above in those ceaseless acts of service in which the whole Church, visible and invisible, loves to set forth the praises of Him "who hath called us out of darkness

into His marvellous light" (1 Peter ii. 9), that we might be a kingdom of priests offering the "sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15).

(2) The Church is called to evangelise the nations, and to maintain the witness of Christ in an evil world. In His great Intercessory Prayer we hear Him saying—"As thou hast sent me into the world, *even so* have I also sent them into the world" (John xvii. 18). Again, after His resurrection He said to His disciples—"Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, *even so* send I you" (John xx. 21). Himself *the* Apostle—the sent One of God (Heb. iii. 1, 2), His disciples (not the twelve exclusively, albeit specially) were in like manner to regard themselves as "sent" of God, *Apostles* even as He was. His mission, in other words, was henceforth to be carried on by His disciples. Personally and collectively, all who have believed in Him for the remission of sins and have been made sharers of His victorious power are the organ through which from His mediatorial throne in heaven He is now fulfilling the purposes of His divine mercy towards mankind. For this end the Church has been endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost and is perpetuated from age to age, that by it His Apostleship may be continued upon the earth through all ages till He comes again. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," said the risen Lord, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations [make disciples of all the nations, R.V.], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). By these words the missionary office is bound upon the Church *as a Church*. This is not a work which may fitly be undertaken by a few specially devoted souls; it is a charge *which is given to us all as Christians*. To be "fellow labourers" with Christ is our Apostleship—stewards each and all of the manifold grace of the Gospel,

spreading far and wide, by influence, by character, by effort, by gifts and prayers, the sweet fragrance of "the Name which is above every name," that men everywhere may own it, and rejoice in it as we ourselves do (if so be we are disciples at all) until at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 9-11). He does not say to His followers—"Being saved yourselves, stand back, I will save the world." But He does say, "Being saved yourselves, come with me and save others." Thus it has pleased Him as it were to commit to His Church the immortal interests of the whole human race. The instant it ceases to be aggressive as against the kingdom of darkness it becomes weak and impoverished as regards the life of its own members. There is no real distinction between *home* and *foreign* Missions. The work of the Church is one work in whatever part of the earth it is done. "The field is the world" (Matt. xiii. 38). If we have any compassion for our fellow-creatures, if we attach more than a nominal value to the gospel, if in our hearts there is true love for Christ, we must feel ourselves bound by every emotion of gratitude, by every impulse of humanity, by every blessing we enjoy, and by every hope that sustains and comforts us, to fulfil the behest of Him who died for our sins and rose again to send the "Good tidings of great joy" to every creature under heaven.

Nor should it be overlooked that the Church has a *social* as well as a missionary function strictly so called. The care of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the suffering has been very specially laid as a charge on those who profess to be followers of the great Physician who "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38), and "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. iv. 23-25). When Jesus revealed God as a Father He gave us men for our brethren. To deny the claims of this brotherhood of man or to shut the heart against the cry of distress,

from whatever quarter it proceeds, is virtually to deny the name we bear (Matt. xxv. 31-46; x. 42; Gal. vi. 9, 10; Heb. xiii. 16; James i. 27).

IX. **The Church's Final Destiny.**—When Christ said: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18), He guaranteed its perpetuity. Particular or local Churches may disappear. Their candlestick may be removed from its place, but the Church Holy and Catholic being "founded on a rock" cannot be destroyed. In it there is a divine energy which must triumph in the end over all obstacles—a light, sometimes obscured, but never extinguished, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. "The ship wherein Christ is may be weather-beaten, but it shall not perish."[1]

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God" (Ps. lxxxvii. 3).

Meantime we see the Church only in the form of its earthly manifestation. Doubtless in the age to come it will fulfil offices of which at present we have no conception. God hath "created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known *by the Church* the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 9, 10). Its mission, we may humbly believe, is to all orders and ranks of created intelligences. This much at least we do know, that when the end cometh the Church militant which we now see, marred by division, enfeebled by internal weakness, soiled by the dust of conflict, and often "sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before it," shall be the Church glorified and triumphant, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, to whom the promise shall be fulfilled, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. iii. 17; see also Rev. xxi.).

[1] Leighton.

CHAPTER II

THE MINISTRY

On no subject relating to the constitution of the Church has there been more prolonged or bitter controversy than on the Ministry. Silenced sometimes for a brief space it has broken out again and again with undiminished intensity. History records the vehemence with which it was conducted during the stormy seventeenth century. Nor can it be said that it has yet ceased to trouble us. The extreme divisions of the two great classes of disputants occupy positions wide as the poles asunder. The one division is composed of those who regard the Ministry as only a matter of human arrangement and expediency. They depreciate its divine character, and would allow all, at their own pleasure or that of others, to assume the same level of authority. The other division is composed of those who claim for some special order of Ministry such an exclusive position that through it alone, in their judgment, the sanctifying grace of the Gospel is conveyed effectively; there being no ground in the New Testament for anticipating that these can ever flow outside of the well-defined channel it provides for their transmission. "The eager advocates of these conflicting views are so possessed with the absolute truth of the main principle for which they struggle, as to overlook the enormous difficulties that challenge them when they descend to the simple facts of the case; when the bold theory of the latitudinarian is met not only by the internal improbability of the supposition, but by the clear evidence of Scripture and Apostolic antiquity," or on the other hand when the

opposite theory is "encountered by the overwhelming evidence of daily experience establishing by the most decisive attestations, by proofs, which, if we reject we must reject all human reasoning on religion, that the purifying and saving graces of the Gospel are not limited as some would affirm, but extend through every community in which the leading doctrines of the Faith of Christ are preached." [1]

It is impossible to ignore the unambiguous testimony of Scripture to the origin of the Ministry as an ordinance necessary for the well-being of the Church, and perpetually renewed according to the laws of its organic life by the Lord Himself. But it is equally impossible not to feel that there must be a serious flaw in the argument which obliges a thorough-going believer in "Apostolical Succession," as that dogma is held by Romanists and by a section of the Anglican Church on both sides of the border, practically to "unchurch" the Presbyterian, while in turn the Anglican is himself "unchurched" by the Roman Catholic.[2]

The truth, as usually happens in matters of controversy, lies somewhere between the opinions most directly opposed to each other; and there we must seek for it if we would find and understand it.

I. **The Ministry a Divine Institution.**—With respect to this point, when presented under its most general aspect, there may be said to be substantial agree-

1 Archer Butler's *Church Principles*, 1859.

2 In a letter recently published by a Roman Catholic Archbishop (Vaughan), the following words occur:—"You can never get over the historical and doctrinal fact that for nearly 300 years the Anglican Church has cast aside the essential character of the Catholic rite of ordination, and has used instead a form that was deliberately intended to exclude the idea of a sacrificing priesthood. And with a lapse of validity in Anglican orders is involved, of course, the loss to the Anglican Church of Apostolical succession. I conclude, therefore, that no prudent man can possibly affirm the validity of Anglican orders or trust his soul to their sacramental efficacy." This is the view authoritatively promulgated from the Vatican in the recent Papal Encyclical:—"We pronounce and declare that ordinations carried out according to the Anglican rite have been, and are, absolutely null and utterly void."—Bull. "Apostolicae Curae," Ides of September, 1896.

ment among Christians, though, doubtless, there are some who occupy one of those extreme positions to which reference has been made. Perhaps the most striking exception is the "Society of Friends," commonly called *Quakers*. Their principles are incompatible with "Orders" of any sort. They have no Ministry and no Sacraments, properly speaking. Were we to judge of the system by the saintly lives or by the philanthropic achievements of many of its adherents we might be led to most erroneous conclusions. Individuals no doubt have attained to a very high degree of personal sanctity and active beneficence. But Quakerism, like kindred systems, has in it no element of permanence. "It has not proved to be the seed of the kingdom of God on earth. It has failed because it is essentially incomplete. Its history may indeed remind us that the fruits of the Spirit in personal character may be abundantly produced where organisation is defective. But not less clearly does it witness to the fact that it is never safe to ignore the action of the Holy Spirit, through the Great Body of Christ, or to dispense with any of those ordinances by which the body is fitly framed and knit together."[1]

From the whole tenor of Scripture, and from many of its express statements, we infer that it is the will of God that there should be in His Church an order of men regularly called, and set apart for the work of the Ministry, in respect both to rule and teaching. Under the Jewish Dispensation the Levites were entrusted with the duty of ministering before the Lord. The Ministry of the Christian Dispensation is different. But there are principles common to both. There is an orderly method of administering the ordinances of the Gospel, as of Judaism, and as the method cannot continue orderly unless there are certain persons to whom their administration is committed, we find that from the beginning of Christianity this need has in point of fact been provided for by a succession of pastors and teachers.

Immediately after the Ascension the vacant place of

[1] Westcott's *Social Aspects of Christianity*.

Judas was filled up. In this we observe the first step taken by the Apostles in organisation. It shows the sense they had of the necessity of order and completeness in the corporate life on which they were entering. The three thousand who were admitted to the Church at Pentecost "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine," *i.e.* they continued to wait on the teaching of the Apostles as the accredited ministers of God for the time then present. The Church had now been constituted as the Body of Christ, the temple of His spiritual indwelling by the Holy Ghost. No doubt its *essence* was to consist in the union of its members with the Lord and with each other as joint partakers of a common life. But not in any sense that made organisation unnecessary. Without organisation the new Society would soon have become disintegrated. It still remained for the Apostles to set the House of God in order, so that there might be extension, coherence, and solidarity in the Christian community. Accordingly we find that they were careful to set apart other suitable men to be over the churches which they founded. The allusions to this department of their "care for all the churches" are numerous (see, *e.g.*, Acts vi. 3-6; xi. 30; xiii. 1; xiv. 23; xx. 17-25; Eph. iv. 11, 12; Phil. i. 1; Col. iv. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 7; 1 Peter v. 1-4). Three epistles (1 and 2 Tim. and Titus) are usually called *pastoral*, because chiefly occupied with directions, exhortations, and warnings bearing on the office of the Ministry or Pastorate. The marked solemnity with which the office-bearers of the Church are frequently addressed is most impressive. On the shore at Miletus we hear St. Paul saying to the Presbyters of Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops [or overseers], to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28, R.V.). To this must be added the further and supreme consideration that the Ministry is represented as one of the "gifts" of the glorified Saviour. When He ascended on high "He gave some to

be apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the Body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11, 12, R.V.). No language could intimate more clearly that the Ministry, under whatever name it may be called, is in its origin and design not of man but of God. With the functions of the office as these became differentiated in the sub-apostolic age we are not concerned meanwhile. Suffice it to emphasise the fact that in the New Testament there is indubitable evidence that, in its varied forms, it is an ordinance of divine appointment, to be continued "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13, R.V.).

II. **Confessional Statements on the Ministry.**—In the *Confession of Faith* (chap. xxv.) it is said :—"Unto the visible Catholic Church Christ hath given the Ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, and to the end of the world ; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto." *The Form of Church Government* (approved by the General Assembly with some qualifications in 1645) introduces the subject in a stately preface, in which it is said, "Jesus Christ gave officers necessary for the edification of His Church and perfecting of His saints." "The officers which Christ hath appointed are *some* extraordinary, as apostles and prophets, which are ceased ;[1] *others* ordinary and perpetual, as pastors, teachers, and other governors and deacons." The duties of the pastor are thus set forth, *inter alia*—"It belongs to his office to pray for and with his flock as the mouth of the people unto God, to read the Scriptures publickly, to feed the flock by preaching the Word ; to

[1] This is more absolute than the statement in the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), where this phrase occurs, "Except when it pleaseth God extraordinarily for a time to stir them up again."

dispense other divine mysteries ; to administer the Sacraments ; to bless the people from God ; to take care of the poor. And he hath also a ruling power over the flock as pastor." In the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), one of the chief exponents of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, it is said (chap. ii.)—"Albeit the Kirk of God be ruled and governed by Jesus Christ who is the only King and Head thereof, yet He uses the ministry of men for this purpose. For so He has from time to time, before the law, under the law, and in the time of the Gospel, for our great comfort raised up men endued with the gifts of His Spirit for the spiritual government of the Kirk, exercising by them His own power through the Spirit and Word to the building of the same." Thus it is apparent that Presbyterians, while recognising considerable freedom with respect to the official persons who constitute the Ministry, uniformly represent it as an ordinance which is founded on the revealed will of the Church's Head and necessary for its efficient organisation.

III. **Ordination to the Ministry.**—By ordination is meant "the solemn setting apart of a person to some public Church office" (*Form of Church Government*). "Ordination is the separation and sanctifying of the person appointed to God and His Kirk after he has been well tried and found qualified" (*Second Book of Discipline*, chap. iii.). The Presbyterian formularies assert two leading principles on this subject. (1) No man ought to take upon himself the office of a minister of the Gospel until he be lawfully called and ordained thereto by those who, having been set apart themselves to the work of the Ministry, have power to set apart others. (2) Every minister of the Word is to be ordained by the imposition of hands with prayer and fasting (*Second Book of Discipline*, chap. iii.). Though the last named of these requirements has fallen into disuse the others are still deemed to be essential to a valid ordination. The *Second Book of Discipline* (1578) asserts them to be necessary, and ever since they have been invariably observed.

According to the practice of Presbyterians the act of ordination belongs exclusively to those who have been themselves ordained as Ministers. This principle of Presbyterian polity is the more noticeable when it is considered that in the Courts of the Church ruling Elders have the same power and authority as Pastors or Ministers. Ordination, however, is regarded as outside of ruling, and accordingly Elders, though members of the Presbytery, do not take part in the imposition of hands (*Form of Church Government*, 1645; *Acts of Assembly*, 1698). Neither is ordination the act of the people, though in this matter Presbyters may be justly held to act as representatives of the whole body. "It is surely possible," says one who has little sympathy with Presbyterian order, "that the real power may be the power of the whole body, the Church of God at large, and yet that the organs for its use and administration may be those who, by a Divine descent of ordination, have been empowered for that precise office and duty."[1]

No doubt the people have a very large share in the selection of those who are to receive ordination. Their part is to elect, or call. But election or call must not be confounded with ordination. "It is the leading feature in the system of Independency, or Congregationalism, to confound these two . . . and all approaches to Independency which appear in the sentiments or conduct of particular persons arise from their not keeping them perfectly distinct. Whenever ordination is considered as the act of Jesus Christ by His office-bearers constituting a Minister of the Church *universal*, the idea of one great Society is preserved. . . . But whenever ordination is confounded with election, the unity of the great Society is lost, the whole is crumbled into factions; there is no legal redress for the wrong which may be done by small unrelated jurisdictions, and there is no constitutional means of deciding the controversies which, arising among the separate associations merely from their

[1] Moberly, Bampton Lecture.

neighbourhood, may disturb their peace and embitter their minds."[1] In the New Testament there is no example of the office of the Ministry being conveyed by a direct act of the people, though their sympathy, assistance, co-operation and joint responsibility in the initial stages would appear to have been fully recognised from the earliest times. The case of the elected seven (Acts vi.) is not strictly relevant, inasmuch as their office was not, in the first instance at all events, either teaching or ruling. Besides, though "elected" by the "multitude of the disciples," even they received their "ordination" to the office to which they were appointed from the hands of the Apostles (Acts vi. 6). The history of the Ministry, briefly stated, is as follows: Christ chose men to be Apostles, endowed them with the necessary qualifications, and then gave them a commission to preach and to baptize. They in turn ordained Elders (or Presbyters) in every city. To Titus St. Paul writes, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest . . . ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus i. 5). To Timothy he speaks of "the gift which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. i. 6); again, "of the gift that was given by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" (1 Tim. iv. 14). "And when they had ordained them elders in every church" (Acts xiv. 23). "And God hath set some in the Church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers" (1 Cor. xii. 28).

It thus appears that ordination is a solemn act by which persons found qualified are admitted to office in the Church in Christ's name and according to His appointment. It also conveys an assurance that He accepts the consecration of His servants, and will most certainly be with them in the faithful discharge of their ministerial duties. His is their authority, His their work, His the efficacy of their work.

It is sometimes alleged that this view of ordination

[1] Hill's *Lectures*, vol. i.

leaves no room for the free action of the Church. For instance, it has been asked whether Christians cast on a desert island might not lawfully ordain one of their number to minister to them in holy things? The question must be answered in the light of what has already been said with respect to the *essence* of the Church as distinct from its government or order. The Ministry may be, and in the usual practice of the Church is, the dispenser of the Sacraments and other means of grace. But this must not be held as an iron rule limiting the power which is inherent in the royal priesthood of believers. "A succession in the Ministry is proper and desirable as affording some security for the appointment of qualified persons, and at the same time providing for their being set apart with due solemnity to the exercise of their important functions. Cases may occur, however, in which by this method a pure and sound Ministry cannot be obtained, and in such cases the members of the Church must fall back on those original rights which belong to the whole body of the faithful as a 'royal priesthood,' and must claim, for the time, authority to set up or to restore a faithful Ministry according to Christ's appointment until matters are once more brought back to their normal condition, and the ecclesiastical system is rightly officered and organised."[1] Whatever may be the richly overflowing and exceptional grace of Christ, this affords no warrant for the presumption that would make light of His ordinance and set aside the rule which He has established in His house. It is possible firmly to maintain the Divine authority of the Ministry and the importance of an orderly succession without being committed to any theory which can be deemed magical or mechanical. Nor should it be overlooked that the success of the Ministry must always, humanly speaking, depend on *character* and on the possession of those personal *gifts* of wisdom, utterance, and power which are promised unto all who wait upon God.

IV. The Christian Ministry not Sacerdotal.

[1] Crawford's *Presbyterianism.*

—Every theory of the Ministry that is in any wise inconsistent with the free access of every believer to God through Christ as the one Mediator between God and man, is alien to the spirit of Christianity. No Ministry can relieve the individual soul of its responsibility or rob it of its privilege of personal and immediate approach unto God. The Gospel interposes no sacerdotal system or priestly caste between the Father of our spirits and His children. When the Holy Ghost is setting forth the office of Christian Ministers they are spoken of under various titles. They are called *Shepherds*, *Watchmen*, *Stewards*, *Servants*, *Ambassadors*. But not in one single instance are they called priests.[1] The Greek word *Hiereus*, signifying a sacrificing priest, is applied frequently to Jesus Christ Himself, but never to them. They are not *priests*, but only *ministers* of the Word and Sacraments. "If either bishops or presbyters or any other order of office-bearers cease to be regarded as religious instructors, spiritual advisers, or prudent overseers, and are exalted into the position of 'exclusive conveyers of supernatural influence,' the principle on which, according to St. Paul and the other Apostles, the Church is founded is swept away, and the ground on which we can call all Christians without exception to work for Christ is also removed."[2] Office-bearers are not "the Church," but only the servants of the Church for Jesus' sake.

All who are partakers of the Divine life, and not merely certain official persons, are solemnly bound in their several places and relations to exercise the gifts conferred on them by Christ through the Spirit, for the common good and edification of the Church of which they form constituent parts, and for the universal diffusion of the Gospel by which they themselves have been brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth. It

[1] It is only fair to state that the term "priest," as employed in the English Prayer Book, is not necessarily to be understood in any sacerdotal sense. It is simply "Presbyter" writ short. Throughout what is known as Laud's Liturgy (1637) the term Presbyter was substituted. Often in the Rubrics it is "Presbyter or Minister."

[2] Smith's Baird Lecture, 1875.

was to the whole body of believers that St. Peter wrote, "Ye are a royal priesthood . . . ye are built up as living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter ii. 5). But when, in the same Epistle, he addresses the office-bearers of the Church, he describes them, and himself with them, as "elders," not as "priests." "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder. . . . Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God . . . neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock (1 Peter v. 1, 2, 3, R.V.). The universal priesthood of believers, as derived from and subordinate to the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a fundamental conception of the New Testament. To the neglect of it may be traced not a few of the evils which afflict the Church. It cannot be held too strongly. A sacerdotal or sacrificing Ministry is quite another matter. It has no authority in Scripture, and must be strenuously resisted and condemned.

V. **The Ministry and Offices of the Presbyterian Church.**—Though the officers of the Reformed Church in Scotland are variously enumerated in the Standards of the Reformation period (*e.g.* the *First* and *Second Books of Discipline*), there are three classes of office-bearers which have been recognised, viz. pastors, elders, and deacons. The office of the pastor or minister has already been described. The office of the elder (in the modern sense of that term) is thus set forth :—"As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the Church, so Christ, who hath instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in His Church besides the ministers of the Word with gifts for government and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the ministers in the government of the Church, which officers Reformed Churches commonly call elders" (*Form of Ch.*

Gov. ; Form of Process, chap. i.). With respect to deacons it is further said :—"The Scripture doth hold out deacons as distinct officers in the Church. To whose office it belongs not to preach the word or administer the Sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor."[1]

The government of the Church of Scotland, as of Presbyterian Churches generally, is by Kirk-Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies. (*a*) The Kirk-Session is composed of the minister of the parish, who is *ex officio* Moderator, and of ruling elders. While the minister in his personal capacity conducts public worship and administers the Sacraments, it is the business of the Session to assist him in superintending the social, moral, and religious condition of the people under his charge, to settle the time for dispensing the ordinances of religion in the parish, to judge of the fitness of parishioners who desire to enjoy the privileges of Church membership, and to exercise discipline on those guilty of scandalous offences. (*b*) The Presbytery consists of the ministers of all the parishes in a specified district, and of one elder sent from each Kirk-Session. The Moderator being always a minister, the elders have thus a majority of votes. The Presbytery is required, besides performing certain statutory duties, to exercise superintendence over all the parishes within its bounds, and in this respect may be said to have an *episcopal* function. Any complaint against the doctrine or conduct of a minister must be dealt with by the Presbytery, not by the Kirk-Session. (*c*) The Provincial Synod consists of all ministers and elders who are members of the Presbyteries comprised within a defined district or province. (*d*) The General Assembly or Supreme Court consists of ministers and elders elected by the several Presbyteries of the Church in proportion to the number

[1] Though not so generally as could be desired, the Scriptural office of deacon still exists in Presbyterian Churches. The term is now usually associated in the Church of England with an office which has little resemblance to the New Testament diaconate.

of their respective members, and of additional elders elected by the Royal Burghs and by the Universities. These Courts are linked to each other by an orderly gradation, and opportunity is given by a system of review, complaint, and appeal for the righting of wrongs and the correcting of errors. The constitution of Presbyterian Churches is thus thoroughly popular, while at the same time the authority of judicatories is clearly asserted and defined in a manner consistent with personal and congregational liberty. When efficiently carried out it presents a singularly happy combination of what is best alike in Episcopacy and Independency.[1]

VI. **The Validity of Presbyterian Orders.**—Having now briefly indicated the general features of Presbyterian Church government, it is necessary to advert more particularly to the grounds on which Presbyterians maintain the validity of their orders. This is a branch of our subject that does not admit of exhaustive treatment within the limits of a *Text-book*. All that can

[1] In a sermon recently preached (13th February 1898) before the University of Cambridge, Canon Gore suggested a scheme of reform for the Church of England, which, in its main outlines, very closely resembles the existing Constitution of Presbyterian Churches. He remarked that "To co-ordinate the laity with the clergy (and let it be said presbyters with bishops) in regulating the affairs of the Church, is only deliberately to return to the primitive ideal of the New Testament and the purest Christian centuries. . . . Let reform begin with the *parish:* let the Church Council be constituted, first under merely episcopal sanction and experimentally; but with a view to its legal acceptance. . . . Let the Parish Council elect again representatives to the *Diocesan* Council. . . . Let the Diocesan Council again elect representatives to a House of Laymen for the *Province*, and let the House of Laymen be constitutionally co-ordinated with the House of Bishops and the reformed House of Presbyters." . . . On the same occasion he observed, "That such self-government is possible in a national Church, while it remains established, is sufficiently shown, not only by examples from the Churches of the Continent, but by one which is for our purpose of incomparably greater value—by the Established Church of Scotland. That Church, since the first establishment of its Presbyterian polity in Elizabeth's reign, by the Act called 'the ratification of the liberty of the true Kirk,' has afforded an example of an unimpeded liberty of self-government greater than any which is at all likely to be suggested, or even desired, for England."—*Cambridge Review*, February 1898.

be attempted is to present a bare outline of the argument without entering at any length on details, which are both complicated and extensive. Unhappily, the subject is one on which there has been and still is much controversy. It must be noticed, however, if only for the purpose of entering a protest against the arrogant spirit in which it has too frequently been discussed, even in our own time, by those who assert the claims of Prelacy with its three-fold ministry, in an exclusive sense which we hold to be unwarrantable.

There are other forms of ecclesiastical polity with which Presbyterianism might be contrasted, for example, Congregationalism or Independency, which we hold to be defective in organisation. But as it is from the side of Episcopacy that the Presbyterian Ministry is usually assailed, it may be sufficient meanwhile to refer to that aspect of the case.[1]

(*a*) It is not necessary to assert the divine right (jus divinum) of Presbytery in any sense which requires us to deny the Church-standing of those by whom it is rejected. No reasonable advocate of Presbytery nowadays is likely to adopt the position of Andrew Melville and some of his followers in the seventeenth century with reference to this point.

(*b*) Nor, consequently, is it necessary to affirm that Episcopacy as a form of Church Government is not lawful. If its adherents were content with holding their system to be *allowable* or *expedient*, or even in some circumstances *necessary for the good of those particular Churches* in which it exists, we should be little concerned to disturb them in their persuasion.

(*c*) Further, it may be conceded that mono-Episcopacy in the modern sense (*i.e.* Episcopacy where one presbyter rules over others) arose in some parts of Christendom at an early period of Church history, probably, in

[1] To obviate the necessity of too frequent reference, the author desires to acknowledge his obligations to Lightfoot, Hatch, Gore, Moule, Lefroy, Perowne, Hill, Crawford, and other writers, of whose language he has in some instances availed himself.

germ at least, before the close of the sub-Apostolic age. But it was by no means universal for some time afterwards, and the gradual way in which it appears to have been introduced is an indication that there was no express injunction on the subject. Its diffusion has been traced to (*a*) the natural tendency of precedence to develop into authority, one presbyter being first recognised as chief *among* and then *over* his brethren, and (*b*) the felt need of consolidation and visible unity amid incipient schism, and of a representative and readily available depository of apostolic doctrine amid rising heresy. For a time Episcopacy was congregational, not diocesan. It is said that in the island of Crete there were no fewer than a *hundred* bishops, and this during the period which immediately followed the apostolic age. Diocesan Episcopacy was the later outcome of the Church's extension, with the natural tendency to centralisation which followed. Neither in Rome nor in Corinth do we find any distinct trace of it till long after the time of the apostles. In Scotland there was a Celtic Church for seven centuries before Romanism became the dominant religion (A.D. 400-1100), in which no prelatical or diocesan bishops existed. It was a monastic system, neither Presbyterian nor Episcopalian. It may be admitted, however, that the advocates of prelacy are fairly entitled to plead that their system, in one form or another, can be traced, if not to the sub-Apostolic age, yet very near it, and that in all subsequent ages it has admittedly prevailed to a very wide extent over a great part of the Christian world.

We need not, therefore, have any controversy with those who have adopted an Episcopal system as being, in their judgment, as well or even better fitted than any other to promote the Church's *well-being*. It is only when Episcopacy is advocated on the ground of exclusive Divine right, and when all who reject it are represented as having practically no Church, no Ministry, and no Sacraments, that we are called upon to vindicate our position, not in the way of attack but of defence.

To this exclusive claim the formularies of the Church

of England give no countenance. One of its canons (the 55th), still in force, acknowledges the Church of Scotland as a sister Church, requiring all its clergy to pray for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as parts of Christ's Holy Catholic Church which is diffused throughout the world. Many of its chief representatives from the Reformation till the present day have argued with conspicuous ability on the side of tolerance and moderation. A few examples may suffice.[1]

Jewel (Bishop of Salisbury, 1530-71) dwells on the essential oneness of presbyter and bishop, and maintains that even were the continuity of English Episcopal succession broken, as the Romanists held, it could be restored from within.

Whitgift (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1583-1604) meets the Presbyterian claim that their system was *jure divino* (of divine appointment), not by a counter-claim for Episcopacy, but by the assertion that (*a*) no one certain and perfect form of government is prescribed in Scripture to the Church of Christ; and (*b*) that the essential notes of the Church are only the true preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the Sacraments.

Hall (Bishop of Exeter and afterwards of Norwich, 1627-56, Laud's chosen literary defender of Episcopacy) writes:—"I onewhere reckon Episcopacy amongst matters essential to a Church; anotherwhere deny it to be of the essence thereof. But see the distinction that I make between the *being* and the *well-being* of a Church, affirming that those Churches to whom this power and faculty is denied lose nothing of the true essence of a Church though they lose something of their glory and perfection."

Andrewes (Bishop of Ely and afterwards of Winchester, 1609-28) says:—"Though our government be of Divine right, it follows not either that there is no salvation or

[1] The examples which follow have been selected from Moule's *Outlines of Christian Doctrine*, p. 231, which see for detailed references.

that a Church cannot stand without it. *He must needs be stone blind that sees not Churches standing without it; he must needs be made of iron that denies them salvation.*"

To the same effect are statements by Ussher (Archbishop of Armagh, 1624-56), Cosin (Bishop of Durham, 1660-74), and many more of the foremost divines of the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A similar appeal might be made to authorities not less eminent among the clergy of that Church still living, or only recently departed, all of them men whose loyalty to Anglicanism cannot be doubted, though they have been constrained, both on Biblical and historical grounds, to acknowledge the Church-standing of Christians who have not adopted an Episcopal form of government.

The controversy of Presbyterians, be it observed, then, is not directed against Episcopacy *as such*, but against those advocates of Episcopacy who hold that it is the *only* form of government and discipline which the great Head of the Church has sanctioned and established, the consequence, of course, being that presbyters who have not received Episcopal ordination have no authority to preach, or to dispense the Sacraments, and that churches in which this alleged requisite is wanting are not *churches* at all, but mere human institutes or self-formed associations.[1] The question in short is, Whether

[1] "In defending our own ordination we do not quarrel with Episcopacy as an ecclesiastical arrangement. The gulf that divides us from those who believe in an order of Ministers above Presbyters, with sole power to ordain, is however a very wide one. They hold our ministry invalid, and that we have no part in the historic continuity of the Church. We, on the other hand, maintain that *there never has been, nor can be any other than Presbyterian ordination*, whether called by that name or no; that Presbyters are the successors of the Apostles, in as far as they have successors, that they form the backbone of the Church, and the channel through which power is transmitted, that they can give what they receive and no more, and that all offices and grades above them, from Prelate to Pope, are mere matters of canon law and ecclesiastical arrangement. We can find in Scripture no *institution* of any higher order, no *name* for the office of Prelate, Bishop being, in the language of inspiration, another appellation of

the Episcopal system of three orders in the Christian ministry, viz., bishops, presbyters, and deacons, be so *clearly* and so *exclusively* sanctioned by Divine authority that all other systems which differ from it, and more particularly the system of Presbyterianism, may be justly denounced as unwarrantable and indefensible. It is notorious that to this question many would give an affirmative answer, though doubtless with varying degrees of exclusiveness.

The Scriptural argument turns mainly on the meaning to be attached to the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* (or elder). As far back as 1575 Andrew Melville asserted the identity of these words. "It is a fact now generally recognised by theologians of all shades of opinion," says Lightfoot[1] (late Bishop of Durham), "that in the language of the New Testament *the same officer in the Church is called indifferently* '*bishop*' (*episcopos*) *and* '*elder*,' or '*presbyter*' (*presbuteros*)." This statement is amply confirmed by reference to several passages in which the words occur. For instance, in Acts xx. 17, St. Paul is represented as summoning to Miletus the "elders" or presbyters of the Church of Ephesus, yet in addressing them immediately afterwards he appeals to them as "bishops" or "overseers" of the flock of Christ (xx. 28). Again, in 1 Tim. St. Paul, after describing the qualifications for the office of a "bishop" (iii. 1-7), goes on at once to say what is required of "deacons" (iii. 8, 13). He makes no mention of "presbyters." The term "presbyter," however, is not unknown to him; for, having occasion in a later passage to speak of Christian ministers, he calls these officers no longer "bishops" but "presbyters" (v. 17, 19). The same identification appears still more plainly from the direc-

a Presbyter, not a word as to the *qualifications* required in so eminent a Church office, or as to the *duties* incumbent on him towards his subordinates, or their duties towards him. On the contrary, we find the full powers of the ministry committed to and exercised by Presbyters."—Sprott, Sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Aberdeen, 1873.

[1] *Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 93.

tions which he addressed to Titus (i. 5-7), "That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee; if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God." In not one of these passages is there the slightest hint of primacy. The Epistle to the Philippians is addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus, with the bishops [presbyters] and deacons" (Phil. i. 1). It is noticeable that St. Peter, to whom, above all others, primacy has been attributed, should call himself not only an "elder" or "presbyter," but a *fellow-elder* (*sum-presbuteros*) (1 Peter v. 1). A suggestive fact may here be stated, viz., that the lessons from the Epistles appointed to be read at the consecration of a Bishop or Archbishop, presumably the most appropriate that could be found, are the passages beginning 1 Tim. iii. 1 and Acts xx. 17, both which indisputably refer to *Presbyters* (Church of England Prayer-Book).

Nor is it only in the sacred writings that the terms "bishop" and "presbyter" are identified. *Clement of Rome* wrote, probably in the last decade of the first century, and in his language the terms are still convertible.[1] Speaking of the apostles, he says that they "appointed the first-fruits of their ministry to be 'bishops' and deacons over them that believe." Afterwards he makes it quite clear that by "bishops" he means no other than "presbyters," using these words: "It will be no small sin if we expel from the *episcopate* those who have blamelessly ministered therein"; "Blessed are those *presbyters* who have gone before, whose departure was crowned with fruit and perfection." *Polycarp*, a disciple of St. John, writing early in the second century, speaks only of two classes of ministers, enjoining the people to be subject to their "presbyters" and "deacons." He begins his letter to the Philippians, "Polycarp, and the *presbyters* that are with him." It is admitted that

[1] Lightfoot, Crawford, etc.

with the opening of the second century a new phraseology begins. Lightfoot remarks that in the genuine epistles of Ignatius the terms are used in their more modern sense, but he also emphasises this remarkable fact, that later, in the fourth century, "when the fathers of the Church began to examine the Apostolic records with a more critical eye," they at once detected the identity of the terms. No one states it more clearly than Jerome (A.D. 380), who is universally regarded as one of the most learned and trustworthy of the Latin fathers. In a remarkable passage he argues—"That 'presbyters' and 'bishops' were originally the same; that the primitive Churches were governed by a council of presbyters; that by *little and little, for the sake of preserving order and preventing schism, the government came to be devolved on individuals, and that the 'bishops' in his own day ought to know that they are greater than the 'presbyters' rather by custom than by the appointment of the Lord.*" These points Jerome not only affirms, but goes on to prove by referring to the same passages of Scripture which Presbyterians in modern times are accustomed to adduce. "More full than other writers," says Lightfoot, "he is hardly more explicit. Of his predecessors the Ambrosian *Hilary* had discerned the same truth. Of his contemporaries and successors Chrysostom, Pelagius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, all acknowledge it. Thus in every one of the extant commentaries on the epistles containing the crucial passages, whether Greek or Latin, before the close of the fifth century, this identity is affirmed."

It is thus apparent that in the New Testament and, generally speaking, in the writings of the early Christian centuries, only two orders of ministry—"presbyters" and "deacons"—were recognised in the Church of Jesus Christ.

The origin of the Diaconate is usually sought in the Book of Acts (chap. vi.), though the seven are nowhere called deacons. That of the first order, the presbyter, is involved in greater obscurity. We possess no distinct

account of its origin. It is generally supposed that at the beginning it was, so to speak, a Christianised form or adaptation of the "eldership" of the Synagogue. But, whatever connection there may have been originally between it and the office of Jewish "elder," it appears certain that presbyters were entrusted from the outset with the preaching of the Word and all other spiritual functions of the ministry. Their association with the Apostles in the first "Council" at Jerusalem, when they were permitted to take part in the determination and promulgation of the doctrine of Christ, seems of itself to be decisive on this point (Acts xv.). Not less striking is the evidence which is supplied by St. Paul's address to the presbyters of the Ephesian Church: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops [or overseers], to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28).

"It is clear then," says Lightfoot, "that at the close of the Apostolic age the two lower orders of the threefold Ministry were firmly and widely established, but traces of the third and highest order, the Episcopate, properly so called, *are few and indistinct.*" Having pointed out that "it is not to the apostle that we must look for the prototype of the bishop," the apostles in the strict sense of the word having had no successors, he goes on to account for the origin of the Episcopate as now understood. "The history of the name itself," he remarks, "suggests a different account of the origin of the Episcopate. If bishop was at first used as a synonym for presbyter, and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under whom the presbyters served, the Episcopate, properly so called, would seem to have developed from the subordinate office. In other words, *the Episcopate was formed not out of the Apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyterial by elevation; and the title which originally was common to all came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them.*"

Such is the conclusion to which a writer of pre-

eminent learning, candour, and ability has been led, after an exhaustive review of the whole facts of the case, with no prepossession in favour of the Presbyterian system, and without a shade of disloyalty to his own Church. Nor is it in any sense inconsistent with this position that *on other grounds* he should have held that Episcopacy is a form of Church polity which is absolutely defensible, and in his judgment the best fitted to promote the unity and efficiency of the Church. This only makes his view with respect to the origin of Mono-Episcopacy the more valuable.

It need scarcely be said that it is a conclusion which is entirely confirmatory of the two positions which, as Presbyterians, we are concerned to vindicate—(1) that besides the deacons there was only *one* order of permanent officers established in the primitive churches, to whom the titles of *bishop* and of *presbyter* were indiscriminately given; and (2) that these presbyter-bishops were invested not only with authority to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, but also with the power of ordination (1 Tim. iv. 14) and government (Acts xv.).

These statements may be taken as a summary, necessarily incomplete, of the grounds on which Presbyterians maintain that the commission of their ministers to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments is at least as valid as that of any other Church in Christendom. It is lamentable that a subject of this nature should have caused such widespread division and so many disputes among Christians. The language of the present Bishop of Worcester (Perowne), directed against certain controversialists of his own Church, cannot be deemed too strong: "There is a littleness, there is a narrowness, there is a petty jealousy quite unworthy of a great Society in the way in which some members of our Church stand on their dignity, and refuse to acknowledge those who, if they are mistaken, are at least doing Christ's work in the world, honouring Him, striving to bring souls to Him, though it may not be by our methods." Assuredly it is possible to attach an ex-

aggerated importance to such discussions. Though we feel satisfied that in all its essential features the Presbyterian system comes as near to the model of the Apostolic Churches as our altered state and circumstances will admit of, we do not presume to bring any charge of nullity or invalidity against other Churches which are differently organised.

CHAPTER III

THE SACRAMENTS

I. Christianity a Spiritual Religion.—In its essence it is fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour. The knowledge and love of God as a reconciled Father is its crowning privilege (Rom. v. 1); death unto sin and a new life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost its unfailing fruit (Rom. xiv. 17). But the spirituality of the Gospel is in no wise incompatible with the existence of external ordinances, whereby God communicates to His faithful people the manifold gifts of His grace. It hath pleased Him in all ages to connect spiritual with material things, sustaining faith by signs, symbols, and rites, by which also He attests, ratifies, and fulfils His promises. The tree of life in the midst of the garden, the rainbow after the deluge, circumcision, and the passover, are all examples of what may fitly be called the sacramental element in former Dispensations (see also 1 Cor. x. 1-3). It need not surprise us, therefore, that when the New Covenant was established ordinances somewhat similar, though immeasurably higher, were appointed "to meet spiritual faith with material token," and this not merely for the purpose of affording a striking pictorial representation of Divine things, but as "means of grace," through which the Lord Jesus Christ, from His mediatorial throne, gives Himself, with all His benefits, to as many as receive them in accordance with His appointment, and in humble dependence on His presence and blessing. "A soul in flesh," it has been said, "is apt to use sense, and needs some help of it." This fact is

recognised in a manner suitable to our nature in those ordinances which we call *Sacraments*.

II. The word *Sacrament* does not occur in the Bible. It is derived from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which originally signified anything sacred. In military life it denoted the oath by which a Roman soldier bound himself to be faithful to his commander. This is probably the sense in which it was introduced into the language of the Church towards the end of the second or near the beginning of the third century. The earliest application of the term to anything Christian is found in the well-known letter of Pliny the younger to the Emperor Trajan, in which he speaks of the Christians as wont to meet together on a certain fixed day before sunrise, when they chanted hymns to Christ as God, and *bound themselves by a sacrament* (*sacramento*) not to commit any sin or wickedness. It is believed that its application in this passage is to the Supper of the Lord. At first the term seems to have been employed with much indefiniteness to describe anything that was deemed mysterious in religion. In the Vulgate (a Latin version of the Bible) it is used as the equivalent of a Greek word, translated "mystery" in the English Bible, though that word is never applied in the New Testament to the ordinances which we call Sacraments, but only to a doctrine or fact once hidden but now revealed (Eph. i. 9; iii. 3, 9; v. 32; 1 Tim. iii. 16). According to heathen usage "mystery" means a secret, more particularly a secret religious rite. For this reason probably *sacramentum* was adopted by the Latin translators in the sense above mentioned. It cannot be said that the word throws much light on the nature of the two ordinances with which it has been for so long a time inseparably associated, further than to denote the sacredness with which they have always been regarded, and the solemnity of the obligation which a Christian takes upon himself as a soldier of Christ Jesus.

III. **Sacramental Teaching of the New Testament.**—Although several of the passages now to be

mentioned will demand more careful consideration afterwards, it may be advantageous at this point to bring them together with as near an approach to completeness as possible. In the teaching and ministration of John the Baptist we find the first indication of a sacramental system in the New Testament (Matt. iii. 5, 6, 13-17; Mark i. 4-8; Luke iii. 7, 12; vii. 28-30; John iii. 22, 23). He came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke iii. 3). But it formed a chief part of his office as our Lord's forerunner to point his disciples forward to One mightier than he, who would baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. iii. 11). Apart from this prophetic testimony there is little in the first three Gospels that can be termed sacramental, with the notable exception of the words of institution, by which Baptism and the Lord's Supper were placed for all time in the front rank of Christian ordinances (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; Matt. xxvi.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.). In the fourth Gospel there are two passages which must be held to have reference to the Sacraments, or rather to the truths represented by them. We read (John iii.) that when Nicodemus came to our Lord and addressed Him as a "teacher" sent from God, Jesus said to him—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again [anew or from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God." On Nicodemus objecting, "How can a man be born when he is old?" he received the memorable answer, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There can be no doubt, on any honest interpretation of the words, that being "born of water" refers to the token or outward sign of Baptism, and being "born of the Spirit" to the thing signified—the inward grace of the Holy Spirit. "All attempts to get rid of these two plain facts have sprung from doctrinal prejudices, by which the views of expositors have been warped."[1] To understand them otherwise is to explain

[1] Alford's *New Testament.*

away the simple sense of the words. The wise and pious Hooker gives this rule: "I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of Holy Scripture that when a literal construction will stand, the further from the letter is commonly the worst." And with regard to the unanimous consent of the primitive Church the same writer affirms, "Of all the ancients there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise expound or allege this place than as implying external Baptism." The other passage (John vi.) is similarly related to the Lord's Supper, to this extent at all events, that the subject there dwelt upon is the same as that which is set forth in the Sacrament. To the ordinance itself there is no direct reference, nor could there well have been any. "But the spiritual verity which underlies the ordinance is one and the same with that here insisted on, and so considered, the discourse is most important towards a right understanding of the Sacrament of the Supper."[1]

In the Apostolic writings there are numerous passages which refer to the Sacraments. In the Book of Acts we have an account of the baptism of the three thousand to whom St. Peter said: "Repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38). We have also the baptism of the Samaritan converts, including Simon Magus (chap. viii.); of the Ethiopian (chap. viii.); of Cornelius and his household (chap. x.); of St. Paul (chap. ix.); of Lydia and her household (chap. xvi.); of the Philippian jailor and his household (chap. xvi.); of the converts at Corinth (chap. xviii.), and of the disciples at Ephesus (chap. xix.). In the Epistles, eight or nine passages deal with the baptism of adult converts, teaching that in it they were baptized into our Lord (Gal. iii. 27); into His death and into His grave (Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12); raised with Him (Col. ii. 13); clothed with Him (Gal. iii. 27); all knit into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13); cleansed by the washing of regeneration and

[1] Alford.

renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus iii. 5; see also 1 Peter iii. 21).

With respect to the Lord's Supper, the "breaking of bread" is mentioned five times in the Acts (ii. 42, 46; xx. 7, 11; xxvii. 35). In the Epistles we find two passages of supreme importance (1 Cor. x. 16-21; xi. 17-34).

It is thus apparent that the Sacramental teaching of the New Testament is more extensive than it is sometimes represented to be. No doubt it may surprise us that in some of the Epistles the Sacraments are not mentioned at all, or only quite incidentally. In such Epistles for instance as Ephesians, Hebrews, and 1st John, the subjects dealt with would naturally lead us to expect some emphatic statement with regard to these ordinances. This we do not find, which is certainly a fact that deserves careful consideration, and may perhaps suggest a caution. But we must beware of exaggerating its importance and of drawing from it inferences that would be unwarrantable. The doctrine of Christ and His Apostles, together with the invariable practice of the Church from the day of Pentecost onwards, supply us with a basis of Sacramental teaching so firm and broad as to leave nothing to be desired in the way of Scriptural authority.

IV. **The Sacramental Doctrine of the Reformed Church.**—The teaching of the Creeds on the subject of the Sacraments is both precise and comprehensive. At no point is the "cleavage" between Roman Catholics and Protestants more apparent than here. "Mediævalists, in their investigations concerning Sacramental efficacy, were led not merely to insist on the value of the Sacraments as means in the use of which God's Spirit works, but also to lay down the principle that the Sacraments are so in their nature vehicles of grace that, *ex opere operato*—(from the mere fact of their administration), they convey Christ to the soul. Such a reception of Christ may not indeed be always to salvation; nay, it may be to condemnation; but still the

Sacrament administered always brings with it a spiritual grace. This doctrine was fixed, as the doctrine of the Roman Church, by the decrees of the Council of Trent. They anathematised all who deny that the Sacraments contain grace, or that this grace is conferred by them *ex opere operato*, *i.e.*, by the inherent power of the institution or by the performance of the act, irrespectively of the spiritual condition of the recipient."[1] To this theory the Reformers of all shades of opinion offered an uncompromising opposition. They regarded it with repugnance, forasmuch as it appeared to them to degrade Christ's holy ordinances to the level of magical incantations, which, however unworthy the recipient might be, would work good effects upon his soul. Accordingly we find that the language employed in all the Creeds of the Reformed Church is of such a nature as carefully to guard against this error, while at the same time it asserts in the strongest manner the Divine authority and efficacy of the Sacraments as a means through which the Holy Spirit works in them that *by faith* receive them.

Augustine defined a Sacrament to be "the visible sign of an invisible grace" (*signum visibile gratiæ invisibilis*). This truth was afterwards developed in the teaching of the Reformed Church.

The Church of England (Article 25) affirms that "Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him. . . . In such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect and operation." The Church Catechism says: "A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

The Scots *Confession of Faith*, now too little known,

[1] Harold Browne, *Thirty-nine Articles*.

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though it was the recognised standard of the Church of Scotland for nearly a century after the Reformation, was drawn up by John Knox in 1560.[1] It is in the opinion of many the noblest, as it is the oldest, creed of Scottish origin. Edward Irving says of it:—"I now dismiss this document with the highest encomium which I am capable of bestowing upon a work of fallible man." With reference to the subject now in hand the same writer remarks, "This the confession of the Protestant Church of Scotland is mighty upon the Sacraments, that strongest hold of faith which superstition is ever endeavouring to possess and infidelity to undermine."

To some of its statements it will be necessary to advert at a later stage. The following will suffice meanwhile:—"As the fathers under the law besides the verity of the sacrifices had two chief Sacraments, viz., Circumcision and the Passover, the despisers and contemners whereof were not reputed for God's people, so we acknowledge and confess that we now in time of the Gospel have two Sacraments only, instituted by the Lord Jesus, and commanded to be used by all those that will be reputed to be members of His body, viz., Baptism and the Supper or Table of the Lord Jesus, called 'the communion of the body and blood.' And these Sacraments . . . were instituted of God, not only to make a visible difference betwixt His people and those that were without His league, but also to exercise the faith of His children; and by participation of the same Sacraments to seal in their hearts the assurance of His promise, and of that blessed conjunction, union, and society which the elect have with their head Christ Jesus. And thus we utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but bare and naked signs" (chap. xxi.).

[1] The Scottish Assembly, in accepting the Westminster Confession, declared that "it is in nothing contrary to the received doctrine . . . of this Kirk" (1647), thus acknowledging the authority of the Scottish Confession.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* says :—"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits and to confirm our interest in Him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world, and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ according to His word" (chap. xxvii.). The Larger Catechism thus answers the question, "What is a Sacrament?"—"A Sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in His Church to signify, seal, and exhibit [convey or apply] unto them that are within the Covenant of Grace the benefits of His mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from those that are without" (Q. 162). To the same effect and even more pointed and succinct is the answer to the corresponding question in the Shorter Catechism. "A Sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers" (Q. 92).

In the Reformed Churches there are different types of sacramental doctrine, more or less clearly differentiated. The most outstanding are those commonly associated with three of the Continental Reformers—Luther, Calvin, and Zuingli. The last named can hardly be said to have regarded the Sacraments as means of grace at all except in so far as they exercise a *moral* influence similar to that which is exerted by truth when presented in any form. He defined a Sacrament "to be an external symbol by which we testify for what we are and what is our duty, just as one who bears a national costume or badge testifies that he belongs to a particular nation or society." There is reason, however, to believe that towards the end of his life he ascribed a higher value and a greater efficacy to Sacraments than he had once done. In his great work, *De vera et falsa Religione*,

published in 1525, he admits that he had spoken of the Sacraments somewhat rashly and crudely, and indicates that his view was advancing in what Protestants generally would reckon a sound direction.[1] Luther, on the other hand, went far in the opposite direction; while Calvin adopted that "mean" which in its main features has found such lasting and magnificent expression in the *Scottish Confessions*. At some points the views of Luther on sacramental grace may seem to approach very near to the Romish doctrine which he had rejected. But more in appearance than in reality. "Controversy," it has been remarked, "often produces extreme statements," and it may have been so with him. "If men could thoroughly understand one another's meaning it would probably be found that no earnest spiritually-minded Christian is very far removed from Calvin's doctrine of the Sacraments. . . . Lutherans agree with Calvinists as to what *believers* receive in and through the Sacraments; their chief if not only difference is as to what *unbelievers* receive in them, and that surely cannot be an essential part of the Christian doctrine on the subject. The difference among evangelical Protestants as to the efficacy of the Sacraments, though they have unhappily caused much controversy and separation, are not really great or vital, and have been much exaggerated by misunderstanding or confusion of ideas."[2]

V. **General Description of Sacraments.**—(1) Sacraments are holy ordinances *instituted by Christ*. This principle necessarily determines the number of the sacraments, excluding five of the seven rites which are termed Sacraments by the Roman and Greek Churches, viz. Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, Penance, and Extreme Unction. All Protestants are agreed that the Sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Shorter Cat. 92). The Saviour's institu-

[1] Principal William Cunningham (Edin.), *Essay Zuinglius, and the Doctrine of the Sacraments*.

[2] Professor Candlish, *The Sacraments*.

tion of these ordinances has impressed upon them an unquestionable Divine authority (Matt. xxvi. 26-29; xxviii. 19, 20).

(2) Sacraments are holy ordinances in which spiritual realities are set forth by *sensible* signs, *i.e.*, signs which can be discerned by our senses. "That Sacraments be rightly ministered we judge two things requisite—the one that they be ministered by lawful ministers . . . the other that they be ministered in such elements and in such sort as God hath appointed; else we affirm that they cease to be right Sacraments of Jesus Christ" (*Scots Confession*). The sensible sign in Baptism is washing with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; in the Lord's Supper giving and receiving bread and wine. There are thus two parts in a Sacrament, the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace. A *sign* is a thing which, besides the impression it makes on the senses, suggests the thought of something else to the mind. A *grace* is something freely bestowed or communicated—a spiritual gift of God to man. In order to completeness these two parts must be combined. From another point of view it is not less important that they should be clearly distinguished in our thoughts. "There is in every Sacrament a spiritual relation or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified, whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other" (*Confession of Faith*, chap. xxvii. sec. 2). All the more necessary is it, therefore, to distinguish between the sign and the thing signified, lest by identifying them "we should overthrow the nature of the Sacrament." The water is not transformed into the Spirit, or the bread and wine "transubstantiated" into the Body and Blood of Christ. The material elements, though consecrated to a sacred use, remain as to their physical properties just what they were before. "It is not from any power or virtue inherent in them or in him that doth administer them that they become effectual to salvation, but only by the blessing of Christ and the

working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them" (Shorter Cat. 22-92). It follows that though the elements should always be received with deepest reverence, they should never be made an object of superstitious awe or idolatrous worship. Neither, on the other hand, are we entitled to expect that God will give the "inward and spiritual grace" apart from the elements which it hath pleased Him to select for that purpose. The Sacraments, like the Word and prayer, are ordinary means of grace. We dare not limit the blessed Spirit, who worketh when and where and how He willeth, but no ordinance of God, least of all the Sacraments, can be neglected or misused without loss. The signs which Christ has selected must have some peculiar fitness for the fulfilment of the end contemplated, and when they are rightly used in obedience to His Will we may feel sure that in no case are they ineffectual.

(3) Sacraments are *means of grace*. They are not exclusive channels of grace in the Romish sense. Neither are they bare signs in the Zuinglian sense. "Whosoever slandereth in that we affirm and believe Sacraments to be naked and bare signs do injury unto us and speak against the truth" (*Scots Confession*). Notwithstanding the vigorous protest of the Reformers endorsed by the confessional statements of a later time, it is to be feared that Zuinglian views have prevailed to a lamentable extent in some branches of the Christian Church. Much evil has resulted from teaching which has sought to exalt the Word by disparaging the Sacraments. That there is a close connection between the Word and the Sacraments need not be denied. On the contrary, it must be strongly affirmed. In both Word and Sacrament there is the action of a Divine power. Sacraments without the Word would be of none effect. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). The mind must first be illuminated and the heart affected by the saving truths of the Gospel, else the Sacraments cannot be received with that intelligent and spiritual perception of their meaning, which,

so far at least, is faith in exercise. We must receive Christ as He is revealed and offered in the Word before we receive Him as given in the Sacrament. It does not follow, however, that *all* that is needful for our incorporation with Christ, or for the nourishing and strengthening of the soul in the Christian life, can be obtained through the Word alone without the Sacraments. In order to the accomplishment of the *whole* purpose of God in our salvation there must be a conjoint action of Word and Sacrament. The grace which Sacraments convey to the *believer* is not mere instruction or enlightenment by the knowledge of the truth. It is union and communion with Christ Himself, in the participation of His death and of that life which is ever flowing forth from the Head to the members of the Holy Mystical Body. To put it even on the lowest ground, there is at all events this new thing which we get in the Sacraments—"a better hold of that which we have found in the Word—and the better hold we have of Christ the surer we are of His promises."

In connection with this aspect of the subject the words of the Shorter Catechism already quoted (Q. 92) are most instructive—"Sacraments are holy ordinances instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are *represented*, *sealed*, *and applied* to *believers*." Each of these terms is significant.

(1) *Represented.* This means that spiritual things are set forth figuratively or emblematically. This, indeed, is so obvious as to require no comment. The water used in baptism represents the blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, it represents the application of these remedies to each sinful soul, as well as the freeness with which God offers His gifts. So, too, the bread and wine represent Christ's body and blood, bringing the manner and purpose of His death upon the Cross before the mind with a distinctness which is most impressive, tender, and solemn.

(2) *Sealed.* This expression carries us at once beyond the mere idea of pictorial representation. It is a word borrowed from legal practice both in ancient and modern times. The Latin word *sigillum* (diminutive of signum), a mark or sign, was often used for a seal; hence to sign means to ratify a thing either by setting one's seal to it or subscribing one's name, *signature* meaning probably either the one thing or the other. The words that accompany such signatures are usually "I sign, seal, and deliver this as my act or deed." A deed of sale or of gift when so signed becomes a legal instrument whereby property is conveyed from one party to another.[1] This is the conception which underlies those passages in which the word or its equivalent is found (John iii. 33; 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 19). In the sacramental sense, it is used by St. Paul with reference to one of the Jewish rites in a way which has an important bearing on the sealing effects of the Sacraments (Rom. iv. 11). Under this aspect these holy ordinances have been added to the written Word to give assurance or certification that what is therein promised is given to all who fulfil the conditions of the covenant of which they are the seal. As the seal impressed on the parchment by which property is transferred to another owner secures the possession in his ownership, by a covenant at law which entitles him *to lay claim* to his own; so, too, the Sacraments entitle the Christian to *claim* all the promised benefits of the Covenant of grace, and then to enter on the peaceful certainty of his acceptance in Christ Jesus, because "God is not a man that he should lie."

(3) *Applied.* In the Larger Catechism the word is *exhibited.* This might seem but another form of "represent," but it is not so. In old Scotch and English *exhibited* is the equivalent of apply. George Gillespie, explaining what "exhibitive" signs mean in Protestant writers, says, "I answer that *exhibition* is a real, effectual, lively application of Christ and all His benefits to every one that believeth, for the staying, strengthening, con-

[1] Norris, *Rudiments of Theology.*

firming, and comforting of the soul."[1] By the use of this word it is intimated that the Sacraments are not to be regarded merely as external signs or seals by which something material is employed to symbolise or to ratify the spiritual gift that is promised, but that they are the channels of a real communication of the grace of God in Christ Jesus to all who receive them in faith. It rebukes tendencies all too common to regard the Sacraments from what may be called the purely figurative or symbolical point of view. "God," says Calvin, "never cheats His people with vain or empty shows."

(4) *To Believers.* It is a fundamental principle of the Reformed Church that *faith* is the indispensable condition of the reception and right use of the grace of Sacraments. From the human side it is faith which unites the sign and the thing signified, even as from the divine side the union is accomplished through the blessing of Christ and by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. This principle, when firmly grasped, is the best of all safeguards against superstition on the one hand and a cold dead formalism on the other.

[1] *Aaron's Rod Blossoming.*

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

I. **Institution of the Ordinance.**—As a Christian Sacrament, baptism was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ when He gave this commission to His disciples after His resurrection: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 18-20, R.V.).

An ordinance appointed at such a time and in terms so solemn and authoritative must have been designed by its Divine Author for some great purpose essential to the wellbeing of His Church in all ages. What this purpose was will appear more clearly as we proceed. Meanwhile, suffice it to say that baptism thus instituted is an ordinance based on the antecedent fact, that to Jesus in His heavenly human life as High Priest over the House of God for ever "all power" has been granted; and further, that it derives whatever grace or spiritual benefit is connected with it from His continual presence and action in His Church by His Holy Spirit, "alway, even unto the end of the world." In order to appreciate the full significance of the ordinance it is necessary that we should be "rooted and grounded" in the faith of "the Word made flesh"; "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification"; Who liveth evermore in the glory of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, "Head over all things to His Church." Only in so far as we are able spiritually to discern that we are saved through union with Him who died and rose again that He might be the Author of everlasting

salvation to as many as believe on His name, are we in a fit state of mind to understand the supreme value of any of those ordinances which He has appointed in His Church to be channels of a divine communication to the souls of His people.

The term baptism is derived from the Greek word *baptidzein*. Dr. Edward Robinson, still an acknowledged authority on New Testament Greek, gives in his Dictionary the following meanings of this word :—" In the New Testament, to wash, to lave, to cleanse by washing; whilst in Greek writers it signifies to sink, to immerse, to overwhelm either wholly or partially; yet in the Hellenistic usage (the dialect of the New Testament), and especially in reference to the rite of baptism, it would seem to have expressed not always immersion but the more general idea of ablution or affusion." In classical literature and in the New Testament itself the word is used with much latitude of meaning, and frequently in a connection which shows that literal immersion could not always have been intended. Sometimes it is applied to the washing of the hands before meat (Mark vii. 4). Again (in the same passage) to the washing of cups. In its most general sense it denotes a " washing " for any sacred purpose. Among the nations of antiquity the use of water to symbolise the removal of pollution in connection with religious rites was common. Under the Mosaic ritual the change from ceremonial defilement to ceremonial purity was accomplished by washings. " Divers washings " were prescribed to priests and people for this purpose (Heb. ix. 10). Baptism is said by some to have been used by the Jews in the admission of Gentile proselytes. The authority of the Talmud (an ancient book containing Jewish traditions and explanations of the law) supports this view, though it is by no means universally accepted. In any case the frequency of washings as enjoined by the Mosaic law and practised by the people; the numerous figures borrowed from the practice in the writings of the prophets; and the obvious fitness of water as a symbol of

purification must have prepared the minds of the people for the institution of the Christian rite. Accordingly when John appeared in Judæa "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke iii. 3), we do not find that his baptism was regarded in the light of a novelty. When the Jews sent deputies from Jerusalem to ask him, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" (John i. 19-28), it would appear that their difficulty had reference not so much to the nature of the rite as to his authority to administer it. The validity of his baptism, for the purpose then contemplated, was amply confirmed when Jesus, "to fulfil all righteousness," was baptized by His forerunner in the Jordan, with the accompanying tokens of the Spirit of God descending in form like a dove, and the voice from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 13-17). This memorable scene at the Jordan affords something of the nature of a prophetic anticipation or picture of what Christian baptism is *when complete*. The relationship declared was sonship; and the gift conferred (though not for the first time on the beloved Son) was the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Baptism similar to that of John was also administered by the hands of the disciples (John iv. 2). The most remarkable allusion to the subject which we find in our Lord's public teaching occurs in His conversation with Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). The primary reference of this great saying was to the baptism of John, which Nicodemus had probably slighted (Luke vii. 30). But the words have a further and deeper meaning. Then for the first time, as far as we know, the absolute necessity of regeneration as a condition of entrance into the kingdom of God was announced. Nicodemus was taught that what he needed was more than mere instruction. His nature must be changed at the root, forasmuch as "that which is born of the flesh is

flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (John iii. 6). Of this inward spiritual change, baptism, according to any view of its efficacy, is the sign and seal. Be the relation between the inward and the outward what it may, to this extent at least all are agreed that when *complete* with water and the Spirit, it is the gate of admission into the kingdom of God. It need not surprise us therefore that the sign and the thing signified are conjoined as we find them in our Lord's answer to Nicodemus. It was a germinal word which awaited its fulfilment in the "fulness of the times."

Such, briefly stated, is the history which prepared the way for the institution of baptism as one of the Sacraments of the New Testament. In the full Christian sense it began to be observed immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when the Church was finally equipped for the accomplishment of its sacred mission. In the book of Acts and in the Epistles we find numerous allusions both to the fact of its administration and to the purpose of its appointment (Acts ii. 37, 38; xxii. 10, 11; Rom. vi. 1-4; Col. ii. 12, 13; iii. 1-3; Eph. v. 25, 26; Gal. iii. 26, 27; Titus iii. 8; 1 Peter iii. 21; 1 Cor. xii. 13).

II. **Doctrine of the Formularies.**—In regard to baptism, the formularies of the Reformation period are most instructive; notably the *Scots Confession* of 1560 and the *Book of Common Order* (commonly called John Knox's Liturgy), which was used in the worship of the Church of Scotland from 1564 to 1645. It may be sufficient, however, for the object now in view to confine our attention to the present Standards of the Scottish Church, embracing: (1) The *Westminster Confession of Faith;* (2) *The Larger and Shorter Catechisms;* and (3) *The Directory for Public Worship.*

In the *Confession of Faith* the following statements occur:—

"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but

also to be unto him a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of the giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life" (chap. xxviii.).

In the Larger Catechism the question, What is Baptism? is thus answered:—

"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into Himself, of remission of sins by His blood, and regeneration by His Spirit, of adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life, and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible Church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's" (Q. 165).

The corresponding question in the Shorter Catechism is answered as follows:—

"Baptism is a Sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's" (Q. 94).

The *Directory for Public Worship* gives various directions with reference to the administration of baptism, shedding at the same time much light on the nature and purpose of the ordinance.

It begins with the statement that, "Baptism, as it is not unnecessarily to be delayed, so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a Minister of Christ called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.[1] Nor is it to be administered in private places [a rule flagrantly disregarded at the present day],

[1] This would seem to be too absolute, in view of the fact that in the New Testament the ordinance appears to have been administered by persons who were not ministers of Christ in any official sense, *e.g.*, Ananias, and the brethren who accompanied St. Peter, and by whom the first Gentile converts at Cesarea were baptized. It is possible to conceive *exceptional cases* in which baptism might be administered by laymen without presumption or invalidity.

but in the place of Public Worship, and in the face of the congregation."

Then follows an outline of the instruction which the Minister is to give touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this Sacrament.

This being done, prayer is to be joined with the word of institution for sanctifying the water to this spiritual use. The Minister is to pray, "That the Lord who hath not left us strangers without the Covenant of Promise, but called us to the privileges of His ordinances, would graciously vouchsafe to sanctify and bless His own ordinance of baptism at this time; that He would join the inward baptism of the Spirit with the outward baptism of water; make this baptism to the infant a seal of adoption, of remission of sin, regeneration, and eternal life, and all other promises of the Covenant of Grace; that the child may be planted into the likeness of the death and resurrection of Christ, and that the body of sin being destroyed in him he may serve God in newness of life all his days."

A form of post-baptismal prayer is also given, in which the Minister is "to acknowledge with all thankfulness that the Lord is true and faithful in keeping covenant and mercy, that He is good and gracious not only in that He numbereth us among His saints [His consecrated ones], but is pleased also to bestow upon our children this singular token and pledge of His love in Christ; that in His truth and special Providence He daily bringeth some into the bosom of His Church, to be partakers of His inestimable benefits, purchased by the blood of His dear Son for the continuance and increase of the Church, and praying that He would receive the infant now baptized and solemnly entered into the household of faith, into His Fatherly tuition and defence."

It will be necessary at a later stage to refer more particularly to some of these statements. The bare recital of them, however, is enough to show the very high degree of importance which is assigned to baptism in the formularies of the Church, and thus to rebuke the

tendency to depreciate its importance in the economy of redemption which in some quarters is so common in these days. Speaking generally, we have more to fear from this extreme than we have from tendencies which proceed from the opposite direction. No ordinance of Christ can be meaningless, least of all an ordinance which He appointed in the glory of His resurrection-life, on the eve of His Ascension to the right hand of God in the Heavens.

III. **Mode of Administration.**—"Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.). Much controversy has taken place with reference to the original signification of the Greek word from which the term "baptism" is derived. We have already noticed that it does not necessarily convey the conception of "dipping" in the sense of complete immersion. The idea which underlies it is better expressed by the English word "washing." But it is not necessary to condemn the practice of immersion as unlawful. In the passage above quoted from the *Confession of Faith* this is not done. All that is there affirmed is the sufficiency of pouring or sprinkling as a sign of the thing signified. This is the view held by all the Reformed Churches, with the exception of the religious community called Baptists. At a very early period the question led to a marked difference of practice between the Eastern and Western Churches. In the Greek Church immersion is still insisted on; while in the Church of Rome pouring or sprinkling is the method now adopted, though in England, and in some continental countries, immersion was customary before the Reformation. It may be admitted that in the primitive Church immersion, or at least partial immersion, was a common form, though it is hardly conceivable that the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost could have gone through the same ceremonial as our Lord Himself or those who were baptized by John in the Jordan.

The earliest post-Apostolic account of baptism (*Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, chap. vii.) expressly provides for "pouring water on the head" when immersion cannot be had. This is an instructive fact. It may also be admitted that immersion affords a more striking symbol of the spiritual reality than pouring or sprinkling. But there is no positive injunction on the subject. This may fairly be held to be one of those non-essential matters with regard to which the Church is at liberty to regulate its own procedure. What is suitable for one age or country may be unsuitable for another. National temperament, and perhaps climate more than anything else, may have determined whether sprinkling or immersion was to be the rule. As in the Sacrament of the Supper a morsel of bread and a few drops of wine make a feast, so too in baptism the water poured or sprinkled is sufficient for the purpose in view, though no doubt something is left to the imagination to supply. The demand for immersion has a tendency to create materialistic notions which are inconsistent with the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel. What is really essential is the use of the element of water accompanied by the baptismal formula, "I baptize thee in (or into) the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

IV. **The Proper Subjects of Baptism.**—"Not only those who do actually profess faith and obedience unto Christ, but the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii. See also Larger Cat., Q. 61; Shorter Cat., Q. 95). In the New Testament we find many examples of the baptism of adults. Necessarily the Church at first consisted of those who had passed into it from Judaism or heathenism. Now with respect to those unbaptized in infancy, who as adults profess faith in Christ, there is no difference of opinion or practice among Christians. There are many, however, who hold that infant baptism is unlawful mainly on the ground that, as infants are incapable of exercising a conscious or personal faith, they cannot be fitting

receivers of a Sacrament which is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." This view came into prominence for the first time about the middle of the sixteenth century, with the rise of the religious community called Anabaptists or more commonly Baptists, a very numerous body of Christians at the present day in many parts of Christendom.

Now, with respect to the question of infant baptism, there are various weighty considerations which appear amply to justify the practice as both reasonable and Scriptural.

(1) In the New Testament there is *no prohibition* of infant baptism, and in this case the fact that there is no prohibition has well-nigh the force of an injunction when all the circumstances are taken into account. The first Christians, including our Lord's Apostles, were *Jews*. They had been brought up under a law that required them to enrol their children in the Jewish Church by the divinely appointed rite of circumcision, which in many respects was strictly analogous to baptism. They knew that since the time, far back in the religious history of their nation, when God made a Covenant with Abraham, promising that He would be a God to him and his seed after him, infants had received the sign and seal of that Covenant, and were thereafter reckoned with their parents in the number of God's people. Is it not, therefore, certain that unless *expressly forbidden* they would, as a matter of course, adhere to the same rule in reference to the Christian Church? Is it to be supposed that the multitude whom St. Peter addressed on the day of Pentecost, urging them to come forward for baptism on the very ground that the promise was to them *and their children*, could believe that the baptism then offered to them was yet to be denied to their little ones? "So strong and universal must have been the disposition to bring to baptism the *children* of believers, that if this had not been allowable we should undoubtedly have found in the New Testament more distinct and frequent notice of its prohibition. As for distinct injunctions or recom-

mendations, these could not have been at all needed in favour of any practice about which there had never been any hesitation."[1] This line of argument becomes all the stronger when the essential oneness of the Divine Covenant under the Old and New Testament Dispensations is realised. In the *Directory for Public Worship* the minister is directed to instruct parents, "that the promise is made to believers and their seed (Acts ii. 39); and that the seed and posterity of the faithful *born within the Church*, have both interest in the Covenant and right to the seal of it and to the outward privileges of the Church, under the Gospel, no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old Testament; the Covenant of Grace for substance being the same, and the grace of God and the consolation of believers more plentiful than before." The fact that there is no prohibition, though only a negative argument, is therefore a very strong one. "We must have a precept to forbid us to obey an old law as well as a precept to command us to obey a new one."

(2) It is certain that infant baptism was practised by the early Christian Church, and has continued to be practised ever since. Direct evidence of this fact is supplied by the writings of the Fathers of the Apostolic and post-Apostolic ages, extending over the first three centuries. Justin Martyr (who wrote about fifty years after the Apostles) mentions that there were many among them that were then sixty or seventy years of age who were *discipled* (or made disciples) to Christ when they were *children*, which plainly indicates that children may be disciples, and consequently may be baptized. *Irenæus*, who was born probably early in the second century, and had sat at the feet of Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, says:—"Christ came to save all sinners, who by Him are regenerated to God (the expression commonly employed at that time to denote baptism), infants, little ones, and children, and young men and old men." *Tertullian*, who was partly contemporary with Irenæus,

[1] Whately, *Baptism of Infants.*

gives absolutely conclusive proof that the baptism of infants was a common practice of the Church in his own time, towards the close of the second century. In his later life he seems to have depreciated infant baptism, but in a way which clearly proves that the practice was in the Church in his day and long before it. Origen, Cyprian, and many other Fathers might be cited to the same effect. Augustine, writing towards the end of the fourth or about the beginning of the fifth century, testifies in these emphatic terms :—"The whole Church of Christ has constantly held that infants were baptized. Infant baptism the whole Church practises. It was not instituted by Councils, but was ever in use." Whatever value we may be disposed to assign to the *opinion* of the Fathers on some points of *doctrine*, it is impossible to set aside their concurrent testimony to the *fact* that infant baptism was undoubtedly practised by the Church at a period when it was still under the rule of the Apostles or their immediate successors. About 150 years after the time of the Apostles, some of the early Christians led by one Fidus, an African Bishop, maintained that infants ought not to be baptized till the eighth day. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, held a convocation of Bishops or Presbyters for the purpose of settling the question. There were sixty-six present, and they came to the unanimous decision that infants might be baptized on the very day of their birth. There was no controversy whether they should be baptized at all. It was simply a question as to the day, which shows how firmly the practice was rooted in the Church at that time.

(3) Christ's treatment of children, when He took them in His arms and blessed them, and pronounced them to be members of the kingdom of Heaven, affords a strong presumption in favour of infant baptism. "And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them : and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, . . .

for of such is the kingdom of God. . . . And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark x. 13-15). When the Lord said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," was it not plainly intimated that even little children are included in the embrace of His Church both in this world and in the world to come? Why, then, should they not also be fit to bear the sign and seal of the Covenant? If they are fit for the membership of the Church in Heaven, how are they not fit subjects for the Church below? If they can partake here and hereafter of all those benefits which baptism doth signify and seal, why should they be excluded from the rite itself? Can such exclusiveness as this be well-pleasing in the sight of that holy and loving Lord who said, "Suffer them to come unto Me, and forbid them not"?

(4) We have an account in the New Testament of the baptism of at least three households where the presence of children in some is far more probable than their absence in all (Acts xvi. 15; xvi. 31-33; 1 Cor. i. 16). This fact, taken in connection with the assertion that the promise of the Gospel was to believers *and* to their children (Acts ii. 39), affords a strong probability, to say the least, that infants were baptized by the Apostles.

(5) To this must be added the principle so clearly laid down by the Apostle that the children of believing parents are to be accounted "holy" or consecrated on account of the faith of their parents. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14). Infant baptism, from this point of view, may be held to rest upon the organic relation of Christian parents and their children. From the days of Abraham until now it has pleased God to deal with mankind through His Church according to this rule, "The promise is unto you and to your children" (Acts ii. 39). If it is objected that infants are improper subjects of baptism because they are incapable of that faith which is necessary for baptism, it

may be replied "that this argument proves too much, for the same faith that is necessary for baptism is also necessary for salvation; and it may with equal force be affirmed that infants are incapable of salvation because they are incapable of that faith which is necessary for salvation."[1]

These are the main heads of the argument for infant baptism. We cannot doubt that in this matter the Church has been guided, not merely by an instinct of the human heart which prompts to the observance of a practice beautiful in itself, and fraught with many tender and comforting associations, but also by a combination of facts and circumstances which in their *totality* have all the weight of Divine authority.

V. **Efficacy of Baptism.**—Among all sections of the Reformed Church there is substantial agreement with respect to the efficacy of baptism in the case of *adult believers*. It is universally admitted that when repentance and faith are present the outward and visible sign is accompanied by the communication of the inward and invisible grace, and that the ordinance is thus made effectual by the blessing of the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of its divine purpose.

In the New Testament we have numerous examples of the administration of baptism to persons who had embraced Christianity in mature life. The first and most noticeable occurs in immediate connection with the history of the great Pentecostal gift by which the Church became the "Body of Christ," "an habitation of God through the Spirit." In that memorable hour the word of the Gospel was preached by St. Peter with such power from on high, that multitudes were suddenly awakened to a new sense of their sins, and were moved to cry out with intense earnestness of spirit, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To this inquiry the Apostle replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (or unto) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the

[1] Paton Gloag, *Essay on the Subjects and Modes of Baptism.*

promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 38, 39). We are further told that "with many other words did he testify and exhort," and forthwith "they that gladly *received his word* were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (ii. 41). Now, in this typical instance, repentance and faith (imperfect, no doubt, in some respects, yet sincere and true) preceded the act of baptism, for, as penitent believers in Jesus Christ, those early converts passed through baptism into the Church, and into the conscious possession of all blessings which it signified and sealed to them. This, then, may be taken as a normal example of the efficacy of baptism when administered to adults who repent and believe the Gospel. Like many other recorded instances of a similar nature, it provides the Church with a warrant for requiring that adults should profess repentance and faith before they are baptized. On these two conditions hang the benefits of Christian baptism. No human eye can discern "the thoughts and intents of the heart," but when such a profession of repentance and faith is supported by reasonable evidence of its reality, the Sacrament is not withheld. The Reformed Churches are at one in holding that the rite is void of saving effect when the conditions are not fulfilled. If, from the nature of the case, as in the instance of infant baptism, the conditions cannot be made good before baptism, they must be made good after baptism, in order to the enjoyment of its blessings, and then baptism will not require to be repeated, but only to be realised, appropriated, and improved. But not less strongly is it maintained by Protestants that to the penitent believer baptism has a significance, a meaning, and a value peculiarly its own. It does signify and seal his ingrafting into Christ; his partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and his engagement to be the Lord's (Shorter Cat., Q. 94).

The difficulty of defining wherein the efficacy of the

Sacrament consists is chiefly felt in connection with the baptism of infants. That it is according to the will of the Great Head of the Church that "not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.), is a fact, supported as we have seen, by a variety of proofs, Scriptural and historical, which fully justify the practice of the Christian Church from the beginning. But what is the effect of baptism when thus administered? What does it mean? What benefit does it confer? These are questions which have occasioned much bitter conflict, not only between Romanists and Protestants, but also within the Reformed Church itself. The controversy has mainly turned on the meaning to be attached to the word "regeneration." Much depends on the sense in which the expression is employed, especially with reference to infant baptism. In many instances the issue has been confused, and needless misunderstanding caused, simply by a want of definiteness in the use of terms. This fact has been strikingly emphasised by a past master of the English language.[1] Referring to the disputes which have so long agitated the Church on the subject of baptismal regeneration, the same writer observes "that among many persons [he does not say all] who are in language very much opposed to each other on this subject, the opposition is much greater in appearance than in reality. They are engaged, without being aware of it, in a controversy chiefly if not altogether verbal. The terms 'regenerate' and 'regeneration' are commonly employed in different senses by different persons. 'Regeneration' denotes in the language of some merely that *admission* to Christian privileges and advantages, which is the necessary preliminary to a Christian life. Others employ the term to signify the condition into which a man is brought by that *use* of those advantages and privileges which constitutes a decided Christian character. And 'regenerate' is accordingly applied by

[1] Whately, *Logic*, "Ambiguous Terms."

these persons respectively to conditions as widely different as that of a new-born infant and that of a fully formed man." [1]

The importance of this distinction can hardly be exaggerated. If duly considered it might go far to convince the unprejudiced enquirer that there may be, and often is, substantial agreement among persons who are supposed to hold views absolutely antagonistic. Between those who stand at the opposite poles of the subject, no doubt, there is an irreconcilable difference; for instance, between those on the one hand who practically regard baptism as a mere form or ceremony, more or less edifying, and those on the other hand who represent it, unintentionally it may be, but virtually, as an ordinance which possesses some sort of magical efficacy by which the *germ* of the regenerate nature is, in every case, implanted in the soul, as it were, almost mechanically. At the same time there are points of agreement which amount to essential harmony even among disputants who at the first glance might appear hopelessly opposed, and who perhaps are inclined to think hardly of each other. This is a consideration too much overlooked on both sides of the controversy. Even the most strenuous upholder of Sacramental efficacy will not venture to affirm that all who have been duly baptized are in a state of salvation, or that the grace of the Sacrament is independent of the faith of the recipient, or of the use to which he puts it. Nor will his opponent, looking at the subject from a different point of view, venture to affirm that there is no grace at all connected with the outward sign, and therefore no real difference between the baptized and the unbaptized. They differ in their manner of stating what the grace is which is imparted at the moment of administration (a point by no means easily defined, which must always lie to some extent beyond our ken), but in reality they can hardly be said to differ to any considerable extent with regard to the effects of baptism, in respect either of privilege or responsibility. If some have erred

[1] Essay on "Some Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul."

by an undue exaltation of the ordinance, it cannot be denied that others have erred by an undue depreciation of its benefits. The latter is probably the extreme to which Presbyterians are most prone. Not indeed that there is any general tendency to neglect the ordinance. In all but the rarest instances it is observed. But much ignorance, irreverence, and unbelief there may be notwithstanding. It is greatly to be feared that in many cases the form is all that survives. In the religious education of the young it is too often completely ignored. Children grow up to manhood and womanhood without ever having been taught what their baptism signified and sealed to them. Many even among those who in the main are leading Christian lives derive little or no strength, comfort, or joy, from the remembrance of God's great mercy manifested towards them in this Sacrament of His love. The notion that any spiritual benefit can flow from it, or follow the recipient through life, is not infrequently regarded as an extinct superstition. All the more necessary is it, therefore, that the teaching of Holy Scripture, as interpreted by the formularies of the Church, should be clearly asserted and maintained. It is a great, though by no means an uncommon mistake, to suppose that there is no sure footing to be found between "baptismal regeneration," as held by extreme exponents of that doctrine, and the view of those who attach no Sacramental efficacy at all to the ordinance, regarding it as a beautiful and instructive symbol which has no value whatever beyond what is due to the truth represented by it. There could be no sadder proof of the prevalence of the latter view than the frequency with which it is described as the "naming" of the child!

With respect to the meaning and purpose of infant baptism, the following are the chief points of doctrine commonly held in the Reformed Churches.

(1) Baptism "is the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.). "By one Spirit we all are baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 15). This is not to be understood

as baptism into any local or sectional Church. Despite all diversities of ritual and creed baptism witnesses for the unity of the one holy Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. There is "one baptism," even as there is "one Lord, one faith" (Eph. iv. 5). Notwithstanding slight deviations of practice in certain religious circles, it may be said generally that this is acknowledged by all Christians.

Now it is no slight benefit to be incorporated by an ordinance of God, fulfilled ministerially according to His appointment, into that Divine Society or fellowship which Christ founded upon earth. It means a solemn admission to the participation of great benefits; entrance on a goodly heritage with a right to all the privileges and immunities of the enfranchised citizens of the kingdom of God. It is indeed of the nature of an election or a grace.

But it may be alleged that this language is inapplicable to the case of infants, because the Church includes "all those who profess the true religion *with their children*" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxv.). Having been born within the Church how can they be said to be admitted into it? Undoubtedly the principle which underlies the practice of the Reformed Church is that the children of professing Christians, in a certain though incomplete sense, are born within the Church and entitled by a *birthright* to be recognised as fit subjects for baptism. The blessings of salvation do not indeed always flow in the line of natural descent, yet, notwithstanding, the right of children to a place with their parents in the Church has been acknowledged from the days of the Abrahamic Covenant onwards. God dealt with His ancient people not merely as separate individuals, but as families. Their children had a birthright to the sign and seal of the Covenant then existing. But, by appointment of God, this birthright had to be ratified for them one by one by the administration of the rite that was appointed for that special purpose. In like manner children are now "solemnly received by baptism

into the bosom of the visible Church," albeit "they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized" (*Direct. for Public Worship*). Viewing baptism simply as an initiatory rite, there is no objection to the admission of children to the Christian society that might not with equal weight be urged against the admission of Jewish children under the former Dispensation. There is thus an aspect under which it may be said that "baptism makes a child of God in the sense in which coronation makes a king. Coronation can only make one a sovereign who is a sovereign already. . . . Coronation is the authoritative act of the nation declaring a fact which was a fact before. Similarly with baptism, only what a coronation is in an earthly way,—an authoritative manifestation of a visible earthly truth, baptism is in a heavenly way,—God's authoritative declaration in a material form of a spiritual reality. In other words, no bare sign but a Divine Sacrament."[1]

(2) Baptism "is not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but *also* to be unto him a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.). The Larger Catechism includes "adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life" (Q. 165) among the benefits that are sealed therein. It is important to notice this, for in some quarters there is a disposition to isolate regeneration from the other benefits mentioned, as if it alone was the grace that is signified and sealed. The formularies invariably connect Christ and *all* His benefits with the ordinance. What is said of its efficacy as a means of grace is, therefore, applicable to the whole up to and inclusive of "resurrection unto everlasting life."

If baptism were only a declaration of an existing fact, like "the coronation of a king," it might be difficult to conceive in what sense it could be regarded as

[1] Robertson's (of Brighton) *Sermons*, second series.

a "Divine Sacrament." The illustration is a good one so far as it goes, but it does not supply us with a complete view of the Divine transaction which is effected in and by this holy ordinance. The grace of baptism is *not* regeneration in the sense of a change or renewal of heart, by which God sanctifies or makes holy our corrupt nature. In modern times regeneration, conversion, and renovation are employed as practically synonymous terms. But it was not so originally. When we speak of regeneration in connection with baptism it is to be understood as a new birth into the family of God's Covenant and adoption. As in our first birth we entered into the family of our earthly parents; in our second birth we enter into the family of our heavenly Father. In other words, it is an act whereby God receives us into a covenant relationship with himself, giving us the assurance of all needed help "to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,"—even His own Holy Spirit, without whose grace our privileges as His children by adoption would profit us nothing. That God may at the very moment of its administration impart a principle of spiritual life to be developed afterwards need not be denied. Such thoughts, however, carry us into a region which lies beyond the range of our present knowledge and faculties. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). The mode and the moment are in *all* cases among the secret things of God. It is wiser to hold by that of which we can speak with greater certainty. This much at least may be said of the grace of baptism, that therein the Holy Spirit is given, we may humbly believe, according to the capacity of the recipient at the moment, but assuredly as a pledged and covenanted gift ready to aid and guide us as soon as we are able to use His aid and guidance. A gift may be truly imparted though it does not take immediate effect, "just as an infant may receive some earthly gift

(as for instance a Bible) which it cannot use at the time it is given, but which is nevertheless its own, to be claimed and used as soon as it is able to do so."

The idea which stands out most prominently in the baptismal doctrine of the Scottish formularies is that of a *covenant-sealing* transaction. The analogy of the Old Testament ordinances is kept in view throughout. Substantially, God's covenant under the Gospel is the same as He made with the father of the faithful when He said: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, . . . to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7). Of that primal covenant circumcision was the seal, confirming to all on whom it was impressed the promise made to Abraham. But even at that time there was, so to speak, a Church within a Church, a Church visible as well as a Church invisible. The seal of the covenant, though it carried with it signal privileges, did not necessarily imply the actual possession of all the benefits that were annexed thereunto. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). Similarly in regard to baptism. What really saves a man is not the mere external administration of the rite, though ordinarily that is necessary, but "the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter iii. 21). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, *and* renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus iii. 5). Multitudes of the baptized die unrenewed and unsanctified, but the fact remains that God did take them into covenant with Himself, and did thus admit them into a new condition both of privilege and responsibility.

Let the grace of baptism be what it may, let us exalt it ever so high, it is certain that we cannot realise it as a conscious possession and experience *apart from the fulfilment of its accompanying obligation.* This is a fact

which practically harmonises views of baptism which at first sight appear to be irreconcilable. It is indeed a great objective reality, which must ever constitute the true basis or starting-point of the Christian life in so far as its commencement can be discerned by any human eye. But no one will aver that baptism of itself can secure salvation unless its conditions, which are "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21), are fulfilled. In the case of an adult they must be fulfilled, in some measure at least, antecedently to baptism, just as in the case of Abraham circumcision was the seal of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised (Rom. iv. 11), as also in those instances of adult baptism which are related in the Apostolic records. But as it is impossible to conceive how they can be fulfilled by an infant through what has been called a "Prevenient grace," or a "Divinely-wrought receptivity," it follows that they must be fulfilled in the after-life of the baptized, if at all, and that it is only when so fulfilled that Christ and all His benefits can be applied in their saving power and efficacy. In short, we must "study baptism first in the adult (as the normal type), then in the infant, and not *vice versa.* Ideally the baptized person "seeks the faith," is instructed, admitted as a believer, and is baptized. So ideally the Israelite (if Abraham was his prototype) was circumcised. But the ideal, as in many another case, while remaining a testimony and exposition of principles, ceased at once in circumcision and (as we believe) in baptism, to be the rule of usage. "We baptize infants because of the covenant; we study the covenant and its terms and seals in the adult."[1]

This order of study is most important. When infant baptism is taken for the normal type, as it is by some, for this among other reasons, "that the infant can oppose no obstacle to grace," a theory is adopted which, in our judgment, is inconsistent with anything we find in the numerous examples of adult baptism in the New Testament—our only safe guide in this matter. That

[1] Moule's *Outlines of Christian Doctrine.*

there may be an action of the Holy Spirit in the infant soul may be readily admitted. Such an admission, however, does not invalidate our present argument, which relates to the grace always and necessarily imparted, according to some, at the moment of administration. Though it is not a purely formal act we perform when we pray that it may please God "to join the inward and true baptism of His Holy Spirit to the outward baptism with water," we should never forget that "the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.). "The Protestant doctrine of the efficacy of baptism, as held by the Westminster divines, does not imply that even in cases in which baptism is not only valid but effectual, its effect must take place at once. But on the other hand in such cases the grace is as really connected with the Sacrament as if it had been given at the very moment of its administration."[1]

But though every view of this Sacrament which regards it as efficacious in itself as by a kind of magical virtue (*ex opere operato*) must be rejected, and though "grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated" (*Conf. of Faith*, chap. xxviii.), there is nevertheless an action of God towards the infant baptized which in point of fact is a glorious manifestation of His grace. It is the ordained outward means by which he is received into the "household of faith," and is placed in the arms of the Good Shepherd, "Who carrieth the lambs in His bosom." As certainly as the touch of Jesus revealed His love for the little children, when He took them up into His arms and blessed them, so does the sign of water, sprinkled according to a Divine command in the Triune Name, convey nothing less than an assurance that the child has not been born into an orphaned or forsaken world, but that God is his Father, his Redeemer, and his

[1] Candlish, *The Sacraments.*

Sanctifier. Doubtless the child may grow up to be an enemy of God by wicked works, and so forfeit the "grace" of his baptism; but the character (in theological language), the standing, the vocation it confers he can never lose. Nothing can obliterate the fact that God did take him into covenant with Himself, thus giving Him a title to claim, as by right, Christ and all His benefits. The seal of consecration is for the whole life. He can never more be as though he had not been baptized at all. Sacramentally he has been grafted into the body of Christ, and his calling is so to abide therein that he may bring forth much fruit (John xv.).

Here it may be proper to refer to a question which has often occasioned much painful anxiety, viz., What is the fate of infants who die unbaptized? One of the most terrible results of the baptismal theory of the Romanist, with all allied systems, is that in such cases the sorrowful are bereft of hope, or at all events of such hope as can truly be a healing balm. But we are not shut up to a conclusion which it would be hard indeed to reconcile with our belief in the Divine Fatherhood. Though it must always be on the parents' part "a great sin wilfully to contemn or neglect this ordinance," we can yet leave all such as die in infancy with unfailing confidence in the merciful and loving hands of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," being well assured that it is not the will of our Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish (Matt. xviii. 14). We can adopt the quaint words of an old epitaph—

Say, are they lost or saved?
If death's by sin, they sinned for they are here;
If heaven's by works, in heaven they can't appear;
Ah! reason how depraved!
Revere the sacred page; the knot's untied;
They died, for Adam sinned; they live, for Jesus died.

(3) Baptism is a Sacrament of *responsibility*. "It doth signify and seal our *engagement* to be the Lord's (Shorter

Cat., Q. 94). When Christians communicate for the first time it is not unusual for them to say or to be told that they are about to renew the vow of their baptism. The expression, though not strictly accurate, is a good one. The same cannot be said of another phrase used very often on such occasions, "We wish to join the Church," or "We wish to become members of the Church." It is by baptism, not by the Lord's Supper, that we are introduced into the membership of the Church. Strictly speaking, the Communion can add nothing to the solemnity of the vow that was made on our behalf when we were brought by parents or sponsors to the baptismal font. That vow we are called upon frequently to renew, "taking it upon ourselves," as at the Lord's Table, that, fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we may walk in holiness and righteousness before God all the days of our life. We need often to be reminded and to remind ourselves "that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized die unto sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."[1] To the same effect is the beautiful answer of the Larger Catechism to the question, "How is our baptism to be improved?" (Q. 167): "The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism is to be performed by us *all our life long*, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others; by sincere and thankful consideration of the nature of it and of the ends for which Christ instituted it; the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement; our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that Sacrament; by

[1] Anglican Office of Baptism.

drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, unto whom we are baptized for the mortifying of sin and quickening of grace; and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness as those who have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one Body." These are weighty words, well fitted to remind us that verily our baptism was a most solemn transaction between our souls and God, and that we are individually responsible for the use we make of a standing so exalted, and of privileges so inexpressibly great and precious.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER [1]

I. Institution and History of the Ordinance.—This Sacrament was ordained by our blessed Lord and Saviour on that "same night in which He was betrayed." In the New Testament we have four separate accounts of what happened on that ever memorable occasion, and to these it is necessary at the outset to direct attention.

Three of the Evangelists have recorded the words of institution (Matt. xxvi. 26-30; Mark xiv. 22-26; Luke xxii. 14-23). The fourth and earliest written record of the event is contained in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (xi. 23-34). This famous passage will demand consideration further on. Undoubtedly it contains expressions which have been grievously misunderstood and misapplied. Meantime, however, let it suffice to say that the words of institution as recorded by the Apostle are in all respects similar to those which we find in the first three Gospels, while the authority under which he writes is in no respect less weighty, for he tells us that he "received of the Lord" that which he "delivered" to the Churches that were founded by him (xi. 23). In this remarkable statement he seems to

[1] This chapter is specially framed with reference to the instruction of catechumens. When it is not possible to cover the whole ground a selection may of course be made, but it is desirable that in every case the general view of "Sacraments" (chap. iii.) should be adopted as a basis for further specific teaching on the Lord's Supper. Sometimes it may be advantageous to deal, by way of introduction, with the "invitation to the Feast" (p. 108) in order to remove at the outset difficulties and hindrances often felt by young communicants.

indicate that the institution of the ordinance was communicated to him by a special revelation, such as would appear to have been made on other occasions and in relation to other subjects (1 Thess. iv. 15). Where or how this may have happened we know not. Perhaps it was in the desert of Arabia, when he was dwelling apart from old associations and the haunts of men, meditating in silence on the things of God (Gal. i. 17). Assuredly it is a fact well fitted to impress us with a sense of the supreme value and importance of that which was so revealed. This must also be the impression left upon our minds by that most touching phrase, "the same night in which He was betrayed." What a night that was! The "hour and power of darkness" had arrived, when Jesus and His disciples met together to eat the Passover. The awful shadows of Gethsemane and Calvary had already fallen on the path of "the man of sorrows." He was on His way to the Cross to suffer and die. It was a time, the like of which the world had never seen before and would never see again. It is impossible, therefore, not to feel that an ordinance instituted in circumstances so unparalleled has a claim on the faith, reverence, and obedience of Christians which is peculiarly its own.

In all the passages now cited the *actions* of Jesus in instituting the holy feast are described in language substantially the same. "He took bread and blessed it," so say St. Matthew (xxvi. 26) and St. Mark (xiv. 22). For *blessed* St. Luke (xxii. 17, 19) and St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 24) have *gave thanks*. So also St. Matthew xxvi. 27; and St. Mark xiv. 23; with reference to the cup. The expressions seem nearly synonymous. When consecrating the bread and the wine "He gave thanks" to God His Father, and with the thanksgiving He joined a blessing, thus changing the elements employed, not in substance, not in quantity or in quality, but in use, in purpose, in sanctity, so that what before was common now became the Sacrament of His Blood and Body. This is what His servants now do in His name and after

His example in the prayer of consecration at the Lord's Table.

Though with slight variations, the words which immediately followed the act of blessing are similarly recorded. "Take, eat, this is my body" (see foregoing references). St. Luke adds, "which is given for you" (xxii. 19); St. Paul, "which is broken for you" (1 Cor. xi. 24). There is a little difference in the account of the cup. St. Matthew and St. Mark say, "This is my blood of the new testament [or covenant], which is shed for many." St. Luke and St. Paul say, "This cup is the new testament [or covenant] in my blood."

The words of institution are not recorded by St. John, probably because the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was firmly established in the Church before the fourth Gospel was written. But to that Evangelist we are indebted for a passage that should be carefully read and studied in this connection (John vi.). Whether in His discourse on the bread of life our Lord was speaking with direct reference to the Sacrament which He was about to institute a year afterwards, is a point which has caused much diversity of opinion. While no doubt there is a purely spiritual way in which the words about "eating the flesh" and "drinking the blood" of Christ may be fulfilled irrespectively of this ordinance, it is yet certain that throughout the whole of that wonderful chapter there is a deep underlying reference to the Lord's Supper, or perhaps we should rather say that there is a deep underlying reference in the Lord's Supper to the earlier teaching. The *primary* reference is to Christ's propitiatory death, the benefits of which must be appropriated by the faith of each individual, the *secondary* reference is to all those means by which the appropriation takes place, especially in the Lord's Supper. Though not the only, it is at all events one of the chief means by which the believer feeds in his heart spiritually and by faith on Christ as the bread of life, thus drawing into his soul the nutriment of the Divine life.

In the Acts and the Epistles the allusions to the Lord's Supper, though not numerous, are significant. The most important are those already noticed (1 Cor. xi. ; see also 1 Cor. x. 21). It is evident that from the first the commemorative feast was a part of the settled order of the Church. The language of St. Paul is not that of a man who is setting forth new truth, but of one who appeals to thoughts, words, and phrases that were familiar to his readers. Wherever the Apostles or their delegates went they taught their converts to do this as Christ had commanded, in remembrance of His death and dying love. No sooner had the Church been fully constituted on the day of Pentecost than we find the two Christian Sacraments duly recognised and honoured. Thus for instance we read, "They then that received his word (St. Peter's) were baptized . . . and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts ii. 41, 42, R.V. ; compare Acts xx. 7).

From that day onwards the Lord's Supper has been observed by the whole Christian Church in every age and clime. Mighty empires have risen and fallen ; vast changes have passed over the face of human society ; but through all time and change this simple ordinance has survived, linking the successive generations of the faithful in one glorious and undivided fellowship, and transmitting from age to age the proclamation of the Lord's death. In the golden chain of communions which reaches across the centuries there is no break, and as it has been in the past so it will continue to be in the future, "till He come."

II. **Relation of the Lord's Supper to the Passover.**—In selecting bread and wine to be the symbols of His body and blood our Lord availed Himself of elements that were already present on the table, as part of the ritual of the Jewish feast which He was then observing with His disciples. The new ordinance was grafted, so to speak, on the old, and in a manner which throws much light on both. We read that "On

the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the Passover?" (Matt. xxvi. 17, R.V.).

In order to appreciate the significance of this question it is necessary to keep in mind the elaborate preparation which had to be made by every Jewish family for the due observance of that annual feast which commemorated their protection from the destroying angel, and their deliverance from the bondage of their oppressors. In Exodus (chap. xii.) we have a minute account of the appointment of the Passover and of the manner of its observance. On the tenth day of the month Ahib, the head of each family was to select from the flock either a lamb or a kid, a male of the first year without blemish. On the fourteenth day of the month he was to kill the lamb at even. He was then to take the blood in a vessel, and with a bunch of hyssop to sprinkle it on the two door-posts and on the lintel of the door of his house; the lamb was afterwards to be roasted whole—not a bone of it being broken. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were to be eaten with the flesh. No male who was uncircumcised was to join the company, each one was to have his loins girt, to hold a staff in his hand, and to have shoes on his feet; he was to eat it in haste as the Lord's Passover. Such, briefly stated, without now entering into minute details, was the original institution as given in the land of Goshen. The manner of its celebration in later times differed in many respects from the prescribed ritual as we find it in the book of Exodus. But in its main features it continued substantially the same. Of all the Jewish rites it affords the most perfect type of the realities of the new Dispensation. "For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ, wherefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. v. 8, R.V.).

It need not surprise us, therefore, that there should be a close connection between the Jewish and the Christian feasts. It seems, indeed, as if God in arranging the various appointments of the ancient ceremonial had designed that it should be as full of typical meaning

as possible, revealing for the time, and according to the needs and capacities then present, the mystery of our redemption. Three ideas stand out prominently in the Paschal celebrations :—

(1) *Representation.* When the lamb was slain it was just as if the Israelite said : "This lamb represents what was due to me—from this innocent victim my penalty is exacted, and because it is sacrificed I go free."

(2) *Appropriation.* After the lamb had been slain the first-born was in as much danger as he had been before, till the blood was taken and sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of the house. This being done, the first-born was safe—safe under the sprinkled blood.

(3) *Sustenance.* When the lamb was eaten roast with fire it became the strengthening food of the accepted offerer—a feast upon the Sacrifice.

All that the Passover was of old the Lord's Supper now is, only in a far higher and more spiritual sense, as the commemoration of a greater deliverance and the sure pledge of a more glorious inheritance. And so we read that, "as they were eating," Jesus took bread and blessed it, and the cup likewise. Either on the Thursday that preceded the Crucifixion, or (if we take the Jewish reckoning, from evening to evening) the very day on which He suffered, He superseded the typical feast of the Passover by the commemorative feast of the New Testament. With the Passover, by Divine ordinance, there had always been eaten unleavened bread ; and by immemorial custom there had been successive cups of wine poured out, accompanied by prayers of thanksgiving and the singing of the appointed Psalms (called the Hallel ; Psalms 107 to 118). The bread and wine thus solemnly eaten and drunk at the Passover our Lord adopted as the signs and elements for the institution of His new Sacrament. The shadow then passed into the substance. The type was fulfilled in the antitype.

III. **The Names by which the Ordinance is usually known.**—(1) It is not unusual to call it *the* Sacrament, but improperly, because Baptism also is a

Sacrament. But *a* Sacrament the Lord's Supper most certainly is, in which "Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers" (Shorter Cat., Q. 92).

(2) It is the *Lord's Supper*. In reproving the irregularities that were among the Corinthians, St. Paul says: "This is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. xi. 20). He also speaks of the *Lord's Table* (1 Cor. x. 21). These names suggest the idea of a social or family feast. Assuredly they give no countenance to the practice of a "fasting" communion observed by some Christians. We come to receive, not to give; to eat and to drink, thus feeding spiritually and by faith on Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed (John vi. 55).

(3) It is the *Communion*. This name is suggested by 1 Cor. x. 16. The word signifies a *partaking together*. In this ordinance we have communion with the universal Church, even with all that in every place call "upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. i. 2). Hereby we profess and declare, that "we being many are one bread [one loaf] and one body" (1 Cor. x. 17), by virtue of our common relation to the Head, even Christ. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). Here Christ by His word and Spirit dwells in us; we by faith and love dwell in Him. Here He fulfils His promise: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John xiv. 21; see also Rev. iii. 20).

(4) It is the *Eucharist*. This name is common in many parts of the Christian Church. It is derived from a Greek word signifying *thanksgiving*,—the same word that is employed in the account of the Institution (Matt. xxvi. 27; Mark xiv. 23; Luke xxii. 17, 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24). Not only did Christ "give thanks," we also give thanks by word and deed. With the Psalmist we say: "I will offer

to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxvi. 17), and with the Apostle: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15). This is the great act of the Church's thanksgiving, the utterance of the fullest note of its adoring praise. In the *Directory for Public Worship* it is called "the action," a name which conveys the same idea as Eucharist. It is taken from the Latin phrase *actio gratiarum*, the giving of thanks. The only survival of this name in Scotland is the term "action sermon," often applied to the discourse before Communion.

IV. **The Nature and Purposes of the Ordinance.**—In entering on this branch of our subject it will be proper in the first instance to present the authoritative teaching of the Church as set forth in the Westminster Standards. For the adoption of this course two reasons may be adduced. One is that many are almost wholly unacquainted with these formularies. Another is that on no subject are the formularies more luminous, comprehensive, or Scriptural.

The following are some of the statements of the *Confession of Faith* (chap. xxix.):—"Our Lord Jesus, on the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the Sacrament of His body and blood, known as the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death, the sealing of all benefits thereot unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him, and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him and with each other as members of His mystical body."

"In this Sacrament Christ is not offered up to His Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead; but only a commemoration of that one offering up of Himself by Himself, upon the Cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same."

"The outward elements in this Sacrament duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to Him crucified, as that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the names of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ, albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before."

"Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements of this Sacrament do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified; and all benefits of His death; the body and blood of Christ being there, not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

The following is the well-known answer of the Shorter Catechism to the question, "What is the Lord's Supper?" (Q. 96):—"The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace." The Larger Catechism says, "have their union and communion with Him confirmed, testify and renew their thankfulness and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other as members of the same mystical body."

Article XXVIII. of the Church of England is in complete accordance with the Presbyterian formularies.

In the doctrine of the Lord's Supper thus set forth one very noticeable feature is the care with which it guards us against two extreme views which have prevailed and still prevail in large sections of the Catholic Church.

On the one hand, there is the Romanist extreme of Transubstantiation; on the other what may be called the

ultra-Protestant or reactionary extreme, which practically regards the ordinance as little more than the symbolical representation and memorial of an historical fact.

Transubstantiation is the doctrine of the Church of Rome. It means that in the Lord's Supper, "after the words of consecration, the whole *substance* of the bread is converted into the *substance* of the body of Christ, and the *substance* of the wine into the *substance* of His blood; so that the bread and wine no longer remain, but the body and blood of Christ are substituted in their places. This, however, is said to be true only of the *substance*, not of the *accidents*. The accidents (such as colour, shape, taste, smell, consistency, etc.) all remain unchanged. The substance, which is interior to and not necessarily dependent on these external accidents, is that which is converted. Yet we are not to call it a mere spiritual change (though some of their writers have allowed even this), but the change is a real and miraculous conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the true body of Christ, which was born of the blessed Virgin and crucified on Calvary." [1]

The doctrine of Luther and the Lutherans is known by the name of *Consubstantiation*. It differs from Transubstantiation in that it does not imply a change in the substance of the elements. It teaches that the bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine, but that "in, with, and under" the consecrated elements the true natural body and blood of Christ are communicated to the recipients. In modern times this doctrine is said to be accepted by Lutherans with considerable modification. They prefer simply to assert the Real Presence without indicating its nature. It is enough, they think, to avow the fact, offering no definition of its mode.

To the Romanist dogma of Transubstantiation the Reformers offered an uncompromising opposition. They held that when our Lord said, "This is my body," the

[1] Harold Browne's *Thirty-nine Articles*.

word *is* meant "represents" or "symbolises," in accordance with a usage that is frequent in Scripture (John x. 9; 1 Cor. x. 4). Further, they maintained that this theory confounds the very idea of a Sacrament, making the sign identical with the thing signified, and that it contradicts both our reason and our senses. They vehemently condemned the "Mass,"[1] according to which the ordinance intended to commemorate the one sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is exalted into the position of a constantly repeated, real, though bloodless expiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead.

The ultra-Protestant doctrine, to which reference has been made, is associated with Zuingli and some of the earlier Swiss Reformers (see p. 55), who taught that the Lord's Supper is a bare commemoration of the death of Christ, and that the bread and wine are mere symbols to remind us of His body and blood.

The teaching of the Presbyterian formularies may be said to lie midway between these extremes. They repudiate the conception of any presence of the Lord which is after "a corporal and carnal manner," but assert not less strongly that there is a *spiritual* presence, not less real because it is spiritual. In other words, a Real Presence not in the material elements but in the heart of the believing recipient, to whom Christ in this ordinance does give Himself with all His benefits in a sense higher and more blessed than in any other way. In it "Christ's death is showed forth," yet not as if it were only an historical fact to be remembered with certain emotions of gratitude and affection, but as a life-giving sacrifice to be appropriated as the true food and the true drink of the soul—a means divinely appointed whereby "worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of Christ's body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace."

[1] A name supposed to be derived from the form of dismissal, *missa est*, because the Sacrament was administered only to those who remained at the close of the service.

It is but a Communion, not a Mass;
No sacrifice, but a life-giving feast.[1]

There is "the outward and visible sign;" there is also "the inward and invisible grace." The material elements, when set apart for this sacred use, should always be regarded with the deepest reverence; but it is possible to partake with the lips without "feeding" on Christ at all; and what is a Real Presence to some may be a blessing unknown and unrealised by others. How many fierce debates on this subject might have been avoided if the controversialists had borne in mind the warning of Jesus, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63). Again, "As the living Father hath sent me, *and I live by the Father:* so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John vi. 57). These words ought surely to be a check on all grossly literal and materialistic interpretations of our Saviour's teaching on the "Bread of Life," as well as of His language in the institution of the Sacrament of His body and blood.

Passing from these general considerations, we shall now consider the Lord's Supper under some of its most essential aspects.

(1) It is a feast of *Commemoration.* This is plainly set forth in the words of institution. "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke xxii. 19). It is thus evident that the ordinance is to be regarded primarily as a *memorial* of Christ Himself (on the Person of Christ, see Matt. i. 23; John i. 1-18; Heb. i.; Philip. ii. 6; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Rev. i.). Therein we recall His whole earthly life with all its varied incidents of miracle and teaching. Anew we testify our faith in Him as God manifest in the flesh, our gracious Lord and Master, our Saviour, Redeemer, Friend.

[1] Tennyson. Before partaking of the Communion, shortly before his death, he quoted his own words put into Cranmer's mouth, saying he would not partake of it at all unless it were administered in this sense.—*Life*, vol. ii. p. 412.

But though it may fitly be regarded as a memorial of all that Christ was, said, and did, we are reminded that in a very special and peculiar sense it is the *commemoration of His death.* "This," said He, "is my body which is given for you." "This cup is the new testament in my blood" (Luke xxii. 19, 20). In these words it is His death that is brought before us. "For as often," says St. Paul, "as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death" (1 Cor. xi. 26). The exact meaning is, "Ye proclaim the Lord's death" (R.V.). It has been thought not improbable that the early Christians did this with an audible voice, uttering forth the faith that was in them. To us likewise this Sacrament is a solemn memorial of the Lord's death, whereby we "proclaim" it before God, angels, and men as our only stay. The existence of this ordinance in the Church is a perpetual witness to the historical fact that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on Calvary; but above all it is a witness to the priceless value of His death as a propitiatory sacrifice "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2).

It lies outside of our present purpose to offer anything like a full statement or exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement. It is enough to say that at the Lord's Table we "proclaim" the death of Christ upon the Cross not merely as a noble martyrdom, or as an example of unfaltering allegiance to truth, and the crowning act of a majestic self-devotion. Had this been all, we might indeed have admired His self-sacrifice and have been profited by it, but it would never have redeemed the world. What we do "proclaim" is Christ's death as the righteous ground of pardon, and peace, and life eternal. Here we are taught, in the most impressive manner conceivable, that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18). "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 21). "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem

him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 4, 5).[1]

Theories of the Atonement belong to the province of the theologian. What the communicant should ever seek to keep before him at the Lord's Table is the fact that Christ "died for our sins" (1 Cor. xv. 3), and by His death hath opened up a new and living way unto the holiest of all (Heb. x. 20). This fact we are to commemorate with "an oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same" (*Conf. of Faith*). The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice offered up to God to procure forgiveness of sins. The Scriptures declare that Christ "by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). But a sacrifice of thanksgiving, of praise, and of self-dedication it most assuredly is. Therein before God we plead the infinite merit of the one Sacrifice that can never be repeated. In union with our Great High Priest we "draw near" (Heb. x. 19-22), as accepted in Him who is evermore presenting Himself within the veil "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. v. 6). Thus we *individualise* ourselves as it were before the Cross, saying, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*" (Gal. ii. 20). To each believing communicant Christ says, "For thee My body was broken and My blood was shed"; "thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke vii. 48).

(2) It is a feast of *Communion*. Were the ordinance nothing more than a symbolical representation of our Lord's death, it might remind us of the obligations under which we lie; but it would not be a Sacrament. It is conceivable that the Christian might remember Christ's death without partaking of the elements. He might gaze at them earnestly and devoutly, and so recall the awful tragedy of Calvary. But the command is, "Take, eat, drink ye all of it." These actions represent outwardly what the communicant does inwardly and

[1] The whole chapter should be carefully studied in this connection.

spiritually, when he feeds on Christ in his heart by faith with thanksgiving. As truly as the bread and wine become part of the nutriment of the natural body, in another and deeper sense is the soul nourished with the food of the heavenly life. Here Gospel truths are represented to us and accepted by us. But there is more—there is an actual participation in Christ with all His benefits. "The cup of blessing which we bless," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16). The word translated "communion" is in several other passages rendered "fellowship." It means *joint partaking*. The thought in the Apostle's mind at the moment was the "oneness" of all believers, through union with the Head, even Christ. "For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. x. 17). Elsewhere it is said, "And have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13), words which might not inaptly be applied to the cup of communion.

The Lord's Table is thus a witness to our brotherly relations, sympathies, and responsibilities as followers of Christ. We have fellowship with all who are of the household of faith, whether they are on this side of the veil or on the other. In this ordinance, if anywhere, we ought to feel that the "Communion of Saints" is no empty phrase but a great and blessed reality. Most sad it is to think how often the Lord's Supper is regarded as a badge of separation rather than of union, a communion with a denomination rather than with the whole Church of Jesus Christ visible and invisible.

But our fellowship with one another presupposes fellowship with Christ Himself. The cup which we bless is the "communion of Christ's blood"; the bread which we break is the "communion of Christ's body." The meaning of which is that at His own table there is a special fulfilment of the promise, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will

raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 54). "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him" (John vi. 56). In these words there is a mystery which none can fathom. That they cannot be applicable to the Eucharist in any exclusive sense we have already seen. Every act of faith in which the soul lays hold on Christ is the "eating of His flesh" the "drinking of His blood." But no ordinance of God can be neglected without loss, least of all the Lord's Supper. So long as the Christian lives under the shadow of an unfulfilled commandment his communion must necessarily be incomplete. To feed on Christ as given in the Sacrament must mean this much at all events,—the personal appropriation of the propitiatory death therein commemorated, fellowship with Christ Himself as our risen and glorified Lord, participation in all His benefits of pardon and grace, peace and joy,—in a word, spiritual life imparted by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sap of the vine flowing into the grafted branch, the life that is in the Head communicated to the members —and withal strengthening and refreshing to the soul. "This then it is to eat that meat and drink that drink," says Augustine, "namely to dwell in Christ and to have Christ dwelling in us; and therefore he that dwells not in Christ and in whom Christ dwelleth not, without doubt doth neither eat His flesh nor drink His blood, but rather doth unto judgment to himself eat and drink the sacrament of so great a thing."

Thus the Holy Communion is not merely a commemoration of the death of Christ. It is much more than this. God hath given His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy Sacrament. *How* we receive and feed upon Christ must ever be one of those things which we may not fully understand here. This only we know, that when we come in faith to this sacred Feast, Christ Himself is present in the fulness of His grace,—that the pardon of our sins is confirmed to us and a rich spiritual provision offered and actually

conveyed to every believing recipient of the symbols of His broken body and shed blood.

(3) It is a feast of *Consecration*. The idea of a covenant relation to God is very clearly expressed in the words of institution, "This cup is the new testament [or covenant] in my blood" (1 Cor. xi. 25). "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). In these words there seems to be an allusion to that solemn transaction in the wilderness when Moses "took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. xxiv. 7, 8). To this covenant the Jewish people were unfaithful, but God in the fulness of His mercy hath made with us a better covenant, announced by the mouth of His holy prophet. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . . For this is the covenant that I will make with them, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people, . . . and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 8, 10; see also Jer. xxxi. 31, 32). This new covenant has been ratified to us, not by the blood of bulls or of goats, but by "the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot unto God" (Heb. ix. 12, 14). This covenant is sealed in the Lord's Supper, which is a token thereof as truly as the bow in the cloud was a token to Noah, and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts was a token to the Israelites in Egypt.

But a covenant implies a mutual obligation. If on the one part God says, "I am thy God," we on our part say, "We are Thy people." By a voluntary choice and assent we accept the relation, renewing our baptismal

dedication, and giving ourselves anew to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be His now and for ever His. Every time we receive the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, there comes to us a voice from the throne of the Eternal saying, "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. liv. 10). And as this gracious assurance falls on the ear of faith, the answer of the heart should be, The Lord hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). Claiming the blessings and promises of the covenant of our salvation and pleading with God in the solemn way He has appointed, we consecrate ourselves to His service, engaging in His strength to walk obediently in the way of His holy commandments (1 Chr. xxix. 5; Jer. l. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 17). All this the communicant should endeavour to do—(1) *intelligently*, in full view of his indebtedness to infinite redeeming grace (1 Cor. vi. 20; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Rom. xii. 1); (2) *considerately*, counting the cost of discipleship (Luke xiv. 28; Matt. x. 38; Rev. ii. 10); (3) *humbly*, in full reliance on the all-sufficient grace of God (2 Cor. xii. 9; Philip. iv. 13; Jude, 24, 25).

(4) It is a feast of *Hope*. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death *till He come*" (1 Cor. xi. 26). We also read how Jesus said, when instituting the holy feast, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. xxvi. 29). In this mysterious utterance there seems to be an allusion to the period which the Apostle more definitely indicates in the phrase, "Till He come." It would appear to point forward to some higher development of the ordinance then instituted; to some new and more glorious paschal feast in the Kingdom of the Resurrection. At any rate this Sacrament presents a side to the *future* as

well as to the *past*. There is in it a foretaste of "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 9). "Till He come" it will never cease to be observed. These brief words span the whole interval of time which separates the first coming in humiliation to suffer and die from that second coming which is now the "blessed hope" of the Church (Titus ii. 11-14). If around the table of communion there fall the awful shadows of Gethsemane and Calvary, and our minds are hushed into solemn stillness as we recall each well-remembered incident of the night of the betrayal, bright gleams of the second advent not less truly do fall upon the scene.

From this point of view the Lord's Supper may be regarded as a sure pledge—

(1) Of final and complete salvation in spirit, soul, and body (Rom. viii. 18-24; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24; 1 John iii. 1-3; John vi., with particular reference to the repeated promise, "I will raise him up at the last day").

(2) Of the reunion of all believers in the glory of the heavenly life (John xiv. 1-3; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18; Rev. vii. 9, 17).

(3) Of eternal communion with Christ Himself in that day, when we who "now see through a glass darkly shall see face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12; Is. xxxiii. 17; John xvi. 16-22; Rev. iii. 20).

> See the feast of love is spread,
> Drink the wine and break the bread;
> Sweet memorials—till the Lord
> Call us round His heavenly board;
> Some from earth, from glory some,
> Severed only till He come.

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. xxii. 20).

(*a*) It follows from what has now been said with respect to the nature and purposes of the Lord's Supper that it must ever be regarded as *the supreme act of Christian worship*. It "focuses," as it were, all that is deepest, most affecting, and most elevating in our thoughts about religion, bringing Christ so very near that

the devout believer feels himself uplifted into the "heavenly places." With a peculiar solemnity it unites the Church on earth with the adoring hosts which surround the Throne, crying, "Worthy is the Lamb" (Rev. v. 12). Therefore, "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High."

(*b*) Closely connected with this aspect of the ordinance is the measure of *frequency* with which it ought to be observed. On this point we do not find any express command in the words of institution, or elsewhere in Holy Scripture. The expression "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup" (1 Cor. xi. 26) implies a continued observance, but beyond this it cannot be said to supply us with any definite guide. The practice of the early Church, while it was yet under the rule of the Apostles of the Lord, undoubtedly suggests and warrants a more frequent observance than is common among Presbyterians. From various allusions in the Acts and Epistles, it may be inferred that on every Lord's day the disciples of Jesus "came together" for "the breaking of bread" (Acts ii. 42-46; xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 20). The evidence that they did this is practically the only evidence we possess for their observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. There is reason to believe that the practice continued throughout the whole of the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic ages. The testimony of Justin Martyr (A.D. 138) is well known: "On the first day, called Sunday, the inhabitants both of the cities and of the country are accustomed to assemble in the same place, when the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets are read. Then when the reading is over the President delivers warnings and salutations to the practice of these excellent things. Afterwards we all rise together and pour forth our prayers, and when the prayers are ended bread and wine and water

are brought in, and the President, according to his ability, offers prayers and thanksgivings, and the people respond with a loud Amen." Here we have a delightful picture of early Christian worship, including prayer, preaching, and the Lord's Supper as observed on the day "called Sunday."

Weekly communion was strongly advocated by Calvin and other Continental Reformers (Calvin's *Inst.* bk. vi. chap. xvii. sec. 4). *Monthly* communion is the provision of John Knox's *Book of Common Order*. *Quarterly* communion is the recommendation of the *First Book of Discipline*. In the *Directory for Public Worship*, now our chief guide in these matters, it is laid down, "The Communion or Supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated; but how often may be considered and determined by the ministers and other Church governors of each congregation." Further, it is said, "When this Sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is requested that public warning be given the Sabbath day before the administration thereof," words which seem to imply a measure of frequency so great as usually to supersede the necessity of any intimation on the previous Sunday.

Thus it is apparent that the practice of annual or half-yearly Communion is not only a departure from primitive practice, but also from the original practice of the Reformed Church itself. Happily, in recent years, there has been a distinct change for the better in this respect. No absolute rule has been or ought to be laid down on the subject, but it is to be feared that when the ordinance is observed only once or even twice in the year, its value as a means of spiritual nourishment and refreshment is very apt to be in some degree lost sight of. Oft we should do this in remembrance of Him whose sacred institution it is.

V. **The Invitation to the Feast.**—In two of our Lord's parables the Gospel is likened to a feast (Matt. xxii. 1-14; Luke xiv. 16-24). In both instances the invitation to partake is universal and unconditional (see

also Is. lv. 1-3 ; Matt. xi. 28-30 ; Rev. xxii. 17). But though all are invited to come to Christ, and to receive out of His fulness, it is obvious that the invitation to the Lord's Table must, from the nature of the case, be of a more restricted character. Only to those who truly believe in Christ for the remission of sins and are resolved in the strength of God to lead a Christian life is it addressed. It presupposes at least some measure of faith, love, and obedience. When men are living careless, prayerless, and unholy lives, their *first* duty is to meet God's call to repentance that they may be at peace with Him through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. v. 18-21 ; 1 Tim. i. 15).

But while this fact must be strongly asserted lest the ordinance be profaned, it is not less necessary on the other hand to point out that it is a mistaken notion which regards the Lord's Supper as a privilege that is reserved for advanced or mature Christians. "I don't think that I am good enough to come," is what many say. It is very much as if they said, "I will not take medicine for I am ill ; when I get better I will take medicine ?" If partaking were a higher sort of claim—setting up to be holier than other people, this feeling might be excusable. But if it means, "I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my only Saviour from the guilt and power of sin—I am weak and needing help, strength, and refreshment in my heavenward way," could anything be more humble, less boastful ? The Lord's Supper is not a reward for being "good enough," or a badge of peculiar sanctity. It is for all, whether weak or strong, young or old, who desire to confess Christ before the world and to abide in Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Matt. x. 32 ; John xiv. 6).

If then the invitation to the Lord's Table, though thus limited, is yet addressed to all who believe in Jesus, the atoning Saviour, for the pardon of their sins and acceptance with God as freely offered by His Grace, we may well wonder how any true disciple of the Lord Jesus can willingly forgo the enjoyment of so great a privilege. In

many instances it cannot be said that this is the result of any evil intention. It does not always proceed from indifference to the claims of religion, far less from avowed hostility to Christ's Gospel. Some are hindered by certain traditional views with respect to the fitness that is required; some by local custom; and others possibly to some extent by an imperfect acquaintance with the purposes for which the ordinance was appointed. There is, however, one special hindrance which must here be noticed. No one can read that passage in which St. Paul relates the words of Institution without being impressed by the solemn warning which is there addressed to the Church of Corinth (1 Cor. xi. 27-34.) It is notorious that many are alarmed by the awful words, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The word translated "damnation" means "judgment" (see marginal reading), and is not to be understood in the sense of eternal perdition. We learn from the context that the leading idea in the Apostle's mind was judgment in the form of *chastisement* for the correction of the grievous faults with which the Corinthians were chargeable. He proceeds to say, "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, *that we may not be condemned with the world*" (1 Cor. xi. 30-32, R.V). The judgment or chastisement was for this present life, and is not less applicable to the irreverent and unfaithful use of any of God's ordinances than it is to that of the Lord's Supper, though no doubt the peculiar sacredness of that holy ordinance renders such conduct doubly heinous. The Corinthians, it would appear, had actually turned the Lord's Supper (with the "Love Feast" which accompanied it) into a common meal, had indeed acted in a manner that would have disgraced a common meal, scrambling for the bread and wine so that some got none at all and others got too much, and went away drunken! (1 Cor.

xi. 20, 21). They did eat and drink unworthily, not "discerning the Lord's body," and did thus bring upon themselves (not eternal perdition) but chastisement, following on their gross irreverence and unbelief. These circumstances should never be overlooked in our interpretation of the Apostle's language. There is now as then a right and a wrong way of communicating—a way that is for the better and a way that is for the worse (v. 17). But the warning, though still applicable to the presumptuous and the profane—to all such as are living in strife and schism—"unworthy" because impenitent, unspiritual and unbelieving, is not to be regarded as a bar to the approach of any who come humbly and earnestly, deeply feeling their own unworthiness and seeking all their salvation in Jesus Christ. Great is the difference between coming "worthily" and being worthy to come. To come "worthily" is to have realised our own "unworthiness," and to draw near with no other plea than this, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13). "Let us then consider that this Sacrament is a singular medicine for all poor sick creatures; a comfortable help to weak and fainting souls; and that our good Lord who breaketh not the bruised reed, neither quencheth the smoking flax, requires no other worthiness or fitness in us but that we unfeignedly acknowledge our sinfulness, and emptiness, and imperfection, and look up to Him for the supply of all we need. Wherefore in His name we do in an especial manner invite and encourage those among you that labour under the sense and burden of your sins, and grievously lament your shortcomings and desire to reach out unto a greater progress in grace than yet you can attain unto, to come to the Lord's Table; assuring you in the same most blessed Name of all needful ease, refreshing, and strength to your weak and wearied and heavy laden souls" (Knox's *Book of Common Order*).

There are other reasons which sometimes hinder professing Christians from complying with the invitation to the Feast.

To some of these we shall now advert, as if speaking face to face with those who are in this position. Thus would we reason with them. You would like to be a communicant, would you not? You know that your conduct in this matter is not right. The Word of God condemns it. The practice of the Church in all ages condemns it. In earnest moments when God and Christ and eternity stand out before you as great realities you must condemn it yourselves. What then is it that hinders you?

(1) Is it that you have not had that experience of *conversion* of which you may have heard, and because you are craving for some inward "feeling" or "sign" that you are God's true child? If so, remember that the grand proof of being a Christian is not the recollection that at some particular moment of time or in such and such a place you were "converted" (a thing very true of some), but faith in God through Christ evidencing itself *negatively* by the putting away of sin, and *positively* by loving and holy obedience. Deal with the "facts" of the Gospel to begin with; not with your own "feelings." Be done with self. "Behold the Lamb of God" (John i. 29).

(2) Is it because some go to the Lord's Table who seem to you *none the better of it?* True, for the wheat and the tares are still mingled in Christ's Church, even at His own holy Table. There is no such thing as a "pure" Communion. But there may be repentance and faith where you may little suspect it. At any rate, you are responsible for *yourself*, not for others. If they misuse God's ordinances this is no reason why you should not observe them at all. As well might you say, "Because some get no good from sermons or from joining in public worship, I will never go to Church."

(3) Is it because you do not see how the Communion can *do you any good?* Even if it were quite impossible to see this it would still be your duty to *obey*. If you refused to eat your food because you could not explain how it makes flesh and bone and blood, you would starve.

And even so is it here. No doubt there is a point at which we touch the region of mystery, but there are great benefits given in the ordinance which all can understand and all can receive who partake with intelligence and faith. It is not a charm. It does not work by a kind of magic. Nevertheless Christ and all His benefits are therein signified, sealed and applied to believers. Faith is strengthened, penitence is deepened, love is increased, and hope glows with a brighter flame.

(4) Is it because you shrink from coming under *obligations you cannot meet?* The worst thing you could do would be to continue leading a careless and sinful life under the pretence that God asks more than you can perform. He is not like the "austere man" of the parable (Matt. xxv. 24). His "strength is perfected in weakness," and His promise standeth sure, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

(5) Is it because you think that it makes *no difference* whether you communicate or not? "We are not saved by a Sacrament," you may say. No. Neither are we saved by a Bible or by prayer. But the question is, How does Christ, through whom alone we can be saved, ordinarily give Himself and His gifts to human souls? The Lord's Supper is an appointed and proved "means of grace." No one, therefore, can wilfully neglect it without sin.

(6) Is it because you are *not fit* to come? That may be so. But unless you are prepared for *this*, you cannot be prepared for life or death, for judgment or eternity (Amos iv. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2).

VI. **Preparation for Communion.**—Though the Christians at Corinth had so terribly profaned the Lord's Supper, the Apostle did not prohibit them from again approaching the holy Table. The purpose of his solemn warning was to bring them to repentance for their sins and to excite in their minds such a lively sense of the sacredness of the Ordinance as would lead them ever afterwards to observe it with reverence and godly fear. For this end they are admonished and exhorted to

examine themselves. "But let a man examine himself [prove himself], and *so* let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. xi. 28. See also 2 Cor. xiii. 5).

The self-examination which the Apostle thus enjoins should be habitual in the case of every one who desires to lead a Christian life. No doubt it may be conducted morbidly and with a degree of introspection that is not conducive to a healthful piety. But properly understood, it means nothing more than frequent and serious reflection on our own character and conduct. It is the opposite of that heedlessness in which many suffer themselves to be carried down the stream of time without making any real effort to face the awful question, "What am I, and whither am I going?"

But if this exercise is profitable at all times, how much the more when we are about to draw near unto God at a holy Communion Table. Then very specially are we required to examine ourselves "of our knowledge to discern the Lord's body; of our faith to feed upon Him; of our repentance, love, and new obedience" (Shorter Cat., Q. 97). Without entering here on the details of self-examination thus suggested, it may be enough to say that in no case should the ordinance be observed without such preparation of the mind and spirit as will tend to quicken thoughtfulness, to deepen penitence, and to stir up all the other graces of the Christian life into livelier exercise. As of old Jesus said, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" (Mark xiv. 14), so now He is ever seeking for the guest-chamber in the hearts of a people truly contrite and believing (Rev. iii. 20). Preparation is specially requisite in the case of those who are about to communicate for the first time. That is an occasion of supreme importance in the life of every Christian. It can never occur again. If allowed to pass without any distinct or salutary impression being left on the mind, there is great danger of a formal and undevout habit being formed that will leave its chilling effect on all subsequent Communions. It is not enough that the

candidate be well versed in the facts and doctrines of the Gospel.[1] More important even than that is the awakening of the conscience—the kindling of the devotional spirit—the realisation of the love of Jesus, with the quickening of the spiritual nature in all its thoughts, feelings, and desires. How this can with the Divine blessing best be accomplished must be determined in each case by those whose duty it is to give preparatory direction and instruction. But some practical counsels suitable for *all* communicants may here be offered.

(1) *Recall* the nature and purposes of the ordinance that it may be observed thoughtfully, earnestly, and intelligently. The history of our Saviour's Passion, as recorded in the concluding chapters of the four Gospels, should be carefully read during the week which precedes the communion (Matt. xxvi.-xxviii.), with devout meditation on the freeness of the Gospel, on the evil of sin, on the excellence of godliness, and on the nature of salvation.

(2) Be *definite in prayer*. Beware of vagueness and superficiality. Try to find out your sins, and as they come one by one to your remembrance confess them to God. The penitential Psalms (especially the fifty-first) may be used with advantage (see also Ps. cxix. 59, 60; cxxxix. 23-24; 1 John i. 8-10).

(3) *Lay hold* with all the strength of your will, and as by a fresh act of faith, on the great propitiation of the Cross (1 John ii. 2). More is required than the bare remembrance of the historical fact that "Jesus our Lord was crucified." There must be the appropriation of His sacrifice as for ourselves separately and individually with a grateful appreciation of the benefits thereby secured to as many as believe (John iii. 14-17; Rom. v. 6-11; Gal. vi. 14).

(4) Honour the *Holy Ghost* in the ordinance. It is His office at every Communion to glorify the Saviour—taking of the things which are Christ's, and showing them unto us (John xvi. 14). Depend upon Him, therefore,

[1] The Apostles' Creed may be employed with much advantage as a basis of instruction. (See exposition of it in this series. Dodds).

to open the treasure-house of grace, to warm your cold heart, to quicken your languid faith, to pour life into your soul, and so to reveal to your eyes the "King in His beauty" that you will be constrained to adore and worship Him "as the altogether lovely."

(5) Beware of *distractions*. Take time, as you have opportunity, for quiet thought. Be alone with God. Ask His help and blessing that your communion may be humble, sincere, and true (Ps. xliii. 3-5).

(6) Remember that the blessing of communion *is not to be measured* by the liveliness of your feelings at the moment of partaking. Conscious peace and joy are very greatly to be desired, and may be expected; but when they are absent do not doubt that as certainly as you cast yourself utterly upon God He will not send you away empty.

(7) Never forget that your preparation, be it ever so complete, cannot make you "*worthy*" to partake. After all has been done that can be done in the way of preparation, you can but say with the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof" (Matt. viii. 8); and with the good king Hezekiah, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (2 Chr. xxx. 19).

VII. **The Act of Partaking.**—"It is required of them that receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper that during the time of the administration of it with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on His death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on Him by faith, receiving of His fulness, trusting in His merits, rejoicing in His love, giving thanks for His grace, in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints" (Larger Cat., Q. 174). The particulars thus set

forth are a beautiful and comprehensive statement of the spirit in which the Supper should be observed. It need scarcely be said that outward and inward *reverence* befit an occasion so solemn and affecting. We must concentrate and consecrate our thoughts. We must consider what is necessary if we would open our hearts to the reception of the deepest and holiest spiritual influences. We must, as far as possible, exclude from our minds the cares, the business, and the pleasures of the world, that the soul may have freedom to rise into the atmosphere of the Divine and the heavenly. No right-thinking person can regard the ordinance otherwise than with holy awe.

But reverence is in no sense incompatible with the joy which should at all times be experienced in this solemn service. *The Lord's Supper is a feast of joy.* All that it brings to our remembrance and all that it holds in prospect should make us supremely thankful and happy. "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, . . . but ye are come unto Mount Zion" (Heb. xii. 18-22). "There are not a few who come to the Lord's Supper as if it were prepared for them on Mount Sinai and not on Mount Zion. They come, and they seem to think it right to come, to the Lord's Table as to blackness, and darkness, and tempest; and some remove and stand afar off from it, as the Israelites did from a mount that it was death to touch, and which was altogether in a smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. . . . Not unfrequently has a fence been set around the Lord's Table by no means unlike that on which God manifested Himself a consuming fire; and in the very feast chamber has been heard the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, as if only in their own righteousness might men venture to draw near and meet with God. . . . What! is there no place at the Lord's Table for the woman that was a sinner? or for him who could say only 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief'? or for the poor publican beating upon his breast and crying for mercy? Are there no crumbs of the

bread of life for them? Must the cup of salvation be withheld from *their* parched lips? and must a fence be set about the Table of Communion that such may not approach it?"[1] Every thought, every feeling that is of the nature of slavish fear ought assuredly to be dismissed, and the soul thrown open to the entrance of that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i. 8). "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15).

For the purpose of increasing both reverence and joy such counsels as the following may suitably be addressed to the communicant.

(1) Fix your thoughts steadfastly and in faith on the *act* in which you are engaged. Regard the elements devoutly but not superstitiously. Join heartily in the prayer by which they are consecrated to their sacred use, beseeching God to make them to you in a real though spiritual sense the very body and blood of Christ.

(2) Realise the *presence* of Jesus as your living personal Saviour. You come to "show His death," but not as if He were yet under the power of the grave. Behold He liveth, and *was* dead, and is alive for evermore (Rev. i. 18). Behind God's ministering servant, behind the elements, is Christ *Himself*. Behold Him as the conqueror of sin and death offering you the fruits of His victory. Receive the bread and the wine as from His own piercèd hand, and "feed on Christ in your heart by faith with thanksgiving."

(3) Lift up *your heart* unto the Lord. These should be moments of earnest prayer. God's great goodness should then be thankfully recalled, especially His love unspeakable in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, with devout supplication that the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19) may speedily appear, and that all who now have fellowship with one another and with Christ, as joint partakers of one bread and one cup, may finally be reunited in the

[1] Nicholson's *Communion with Heaven*.

blessed life of the redeemed in glory. The silence with which the elements are passed from hand to hand and from lip to lip at the Lord's Table is most impressive. It suggests a great deal. The word of warning, of invitation, of promise, has been spoken, and now each communicant in the solitariness of his individual existence is alone with God. And "God hears the voices of the heart, and when the heart is too full to speak it saith by the silence of its adoration and worship at the holy Table, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'" To see a congregation thus bowed in faith, penitence, and humility before the Cross, to listen to the low breathing which rises heavenward with the breath of aspiration and prayer, to mark the falling tear which memory has wrung from the glistening eye, to be conscious of a contact of spirit with spirit which seems to overleap the frontiers of time and to anticipate the rapture of the final meeting, to touch Christ by faith, and to know with a certainty of conviction which nothing can destroy that *He* is present,—than this, earth has no more beautiful sight to show us.

(4) Consecrate yourself anew, body, soul, and spirit, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1).

VIII. **The After-Life of the Communicant.**—The grand design of the Lord's Supper, as of all God's ordinances, is to promote Christian living. It is a means of grace from which we should draw strength for what remains of our journey towards that rest and that home which God has promised to His people. The after-life of the communicant, therefore, should be consistent with the solemn profession of faith in Christ and obedience to His commandments that was made at the holy Table.

(1) "*Watch and pray.*" At no time is this precept more necessary than during the period which immediately follows a Communion season. The spiritual, like the physical life, is subject to the law of reaction. In the conduct of the Apostles on the night of the betrayal we find a typical example (Matt. xxvi. 40, 41, 56, 69-75). There is something to be watched *over*—our faith

that it may not fail us,—our love that it may not grow cold,—our hope that it may not be dimmed or quenched; and something to be watched *against*,—our besetting sins —our evil habits—our temptations and shortcomings; and something too to be watched *for*,—the Kingdom and Glory of Jesus Christ, the dawn of the day of perfect consummation and bliss (Ps. cxxx.). And withal there is the constant need of prayer, habitual, fervent, believing prayer both in public and in private (Matt. vi. 6).

(2) *Abide in me and I in you.* This word of Jesus supplies us with another rule of holy living than which none is more needful. It is the secret of *discipleship* (John xv. 8), of *fruitfulness* (xv. 5), of *prevailing prayer* (xv. 7), of *confidence* in the day of our Lord's appearing (1 John ii. 28). Would we receive out of His fulness, we must "abide" in Him by conscious personal faith, and by the diligent use of all God's ordinances. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk* ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him" (Col. ii. 6, 7). As a means to this "abiding" and "walking" in Christ, there must needs be (1) a daily reception of the Lord's Word; (2) a daily submission to the Lord's will; (3) a daily delight in the Lord Himself (Ps. xxv. 5).

(3) *Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.* The Christian has a high calling. It is nothing less than to become Christ-like. He is under an obligation to *confess* Christ before the world,—to serve Christ in the station which Providence has allotted to him,—to seek to be *useful* to others—to advance the Kingdom of God by willing dedication of substance as God hath prospered him; and by loyal obedience in all the relations of life to the Master who has bound us to Himself by the cords of a love unchangeable and everlasting (Eph. iv. 1-3).

"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. iii. 17).

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EDITED BY

THE REV. T. K. CHEYNE, M.A., D.D.

ORIEL PROFESSOR OF THE INTERPRETATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE AT OXFORD, AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, CANON OF ROCHESTER

AND

J. SUTHERLAND BLACK, M.A., LL.D.

ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THE "ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA."

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